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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE MEANING OF "WORKS" IN THE
BOOK OF REVELATION WITH A SYLLABUS FOR
APPLYING THE FINDINGS IN RELIGIOUS
INSTRUCTION

by

Vel Eric Kotter

Chairman: Garth D. Thompson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation/Project Report

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A STUDY OF THE MEANING OF "WORKS" IN THE
BOOK OF REVELATION WITH A SYLLABUS FOR
APPLYING THE FINDINGS IN RELIGIOUS
INSTRUCTION

Name of researcher: Vel Eric Kotter

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Garth D. Thompson,
Ph.D.

Date completed: August 1985

This paper represents an attempt to clarify the significance of the term ergon ("work") in the book of Revelation. The first part investigates the word group ergon ("work") as used throughout the Scriptures, and especially in the book of Revelation. Special attention is given to the word as used in the Gospel of John, since this study accepts John, the Son of Zebeddee, as the author of both the Gospel and the Revelation. The second part

presents five studies representing a practical application emerging from the investigation.

Not only is there a lack of discussion of the word ergon in Revelation, but there is a need to have a balanced understanding of "works" in the discussion of justification by faith and sanctification. Commentators seem to lack a balanced emphasis between faith and works.

When ergon is applied to man in the Septuagint (LXX), the emphasis of the word group is on ethical behavior, not ethical impulses or even "character" as such; the objective manifestation is paramount. When ergon has reference to God, it can describe the work of the Creator, God's acts in history in the realm of the miraculous, and the judgment.

In John, as well as the LXX, "works" inherently are neutral in moral value. The word takes on positive or negative connotations depending on the context in which it is used. All good works in the NT are ultimately considered God's work done through men.

Good works in Revelation, such as love and faith, are the foundational works upon which the others are built. Patience, loyalty, service, and keeping the commandments are some of the works of the saints which develop from the foundation. The evil in Revelation can be found in degrees from apathy to heresies.

"Works," which are exterior ethical behavior, are always and only possible within the covenant relationship

with God. The covenant relationship provides the force and the will for the saints to accomplish works. This is a united effort in which both God and man have a part. Erga are not only separate acts or deeds, they can also be a total life-style, which is accomplished by the saints by imitating the character of the Lamb who has won the victory over Satan through His blood.

Since the word ergon in John is used in the sense of miracles, in Revelation it is used in the sense of deeds. The devils, on the other hand, perform sēmeion ("miracles") to proclaim the authority of Satan over God. The saints perform deeds to authenticate their discipleship of Christ.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A STUDY OF THE MEANING OF "WORKS" IN THE
BOOK OF REVELATION WITH A SYLLABUS FOR
APPLYING THE FINDINGS IN RELIGIOUS
INSTRUCTION

A Dissertation/Project
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Vel Eric Kotter

July 1985

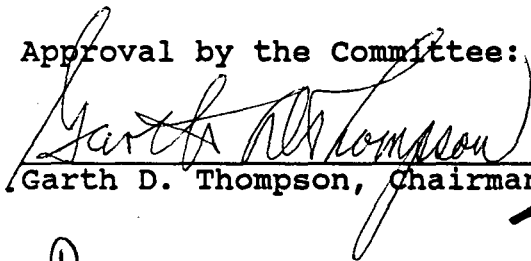
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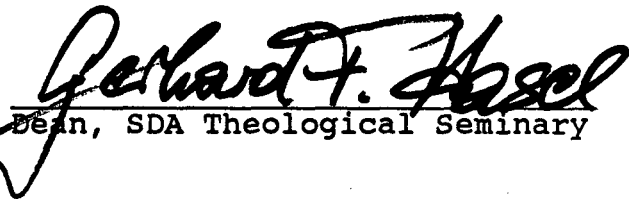
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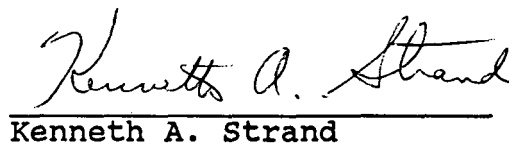
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NOTE

This Doctor of Ministry Dissertation/Project falls under the category described in the Seminary Bulletin as Project II, a paper completed in fulfillment of requirements for an alternate curriculum plan under which the candidate prepares two related papers--a theological position paper addressing some issues or problem that exists in the Seventh-day Adventist church in a theological setting and a professional paper addressing this same issue or problem from the standpoint of ministerial practice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	=	Anchor Bible
<u>AUSS</u>	=	<u>Andrews University Seminary Studies</u>
BDB	=	Brown, Francis; Driver, Samuel R.; and Briggs, Charles A. <u>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</u> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.
COT	=	Commentary on the Old Testament. 10 vols. Edited by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.,
EGT	=	The Expositor's Greek Testament
ICC	=	International Critical Commentary
<u>JBL</u>	=	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
LXX	=	The Septuagint
MT	=	Masoretic Text
NICNT	=	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	=	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NT	=	New Testament
OT	=	Old Testament
<u>TDNT</u>	=	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u> . 10 vols. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964-76.
<u>TWOT</u>	=	<u>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</u> . 2 vols. Edited by R. Laird Harris. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

TRANSLITERATION OF HEBREW AND GREEK ALPHABETS

1. Hebrew Alphabet

Consonants	Masoretic Vowel Pointings
א = ' (vocal shewa)	ְ = a
ב = b	בְ = ā
בּ = bh	בֿ = a
ג = g	גְ = e
גּ = gh	גֿ = ē
ד = d	דְ, דֿ = e (vocal shewa)
דּ = dh	דֿ, דֿֿ = ê
ה = h	הְ = i
ו = w	וְ = î
ז = z	זְ = o
ח = ch	חְ = ô
ט = t	טְ = °
י = y	יְ = ô
כ = k	כְ = u
כּ = kh	כֿ = û
ל = l	
מ = m	
נ = n	
ס = s	
ע = c	
פ = p	
פּ = ph	
צ = ts	
ק = q	
ר = r	
שׁ = s'	
שׂ = sh	
תּ = t	
תּ = th	

2. Greek Alphabet

Consonants and Vowels

α = a
β = b
γ = g
δ = d
ε = e
ζ = z
η = ē
θ = th
ι = i
κ = k
λ = l
μ = m
ν = n
ξ = x
ο = o
π = p
ρ = r
σ = s
τ = t
υ = u
φ = ph
χ = ch
ψ = ps
ω = ō
· = h

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I wish to express my gratitude to the freedom of the theological environment at Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary where such a study as this could germinate, develop and come into final form. The stimulation found on this campus was most inspiring. I developed not only theologically but spiritually as I studied here.

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Finally, I wish to thank my Savior for guiding my life and granting me the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with Him as I studied here.

INTRODUCTION

The investigation reported in this dissertation/-project represents an attempt to clarify the significance and usage of the term ergon in the book of Revelation. Basically, the study is composed of two parts. The first part is the investigation of the term ergon as used throughout the Scriptures and especially in the book of Revelation. The second part is the presentation of five studies representing a practical application emerging from the investigation. The appendix provides additional information about the term ergon as used in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) and in the Greek New Testament.

Completing a literature search on the word ergon in the book of Revelation revealed no dissertation, monograph, or article on the subject. Except for two paragraphs written by R. H. Charles in his commentary on Revelation,¹ no special discussion was found on the subject in books written on the Apocalypse. Articles in theological dictionaries treat ergon only in a cursory manner.

Commentators on Revelation seem to lack a balanced emphasis between faith and works. Some

¹R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Revelation of St. John, 2 vols., ICC (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1920), 1:cxv.

commentators like Swete see in Revelation an overemphasis between works as opposed to faith in Christ:

The Apocalyptist dwells more frequently on "works" than on "faith." To represent this as a return to a Jewish standpoint is arbitrary but it cannot be denied that it is a distinguishing note of the Apocalypse. Faith is rarely named in the book, and when it is, it does not appear as the primary necessity of the Christian life; the decisive place is given to works; the fair linen which decks the saints is woven out of their righteous acts.¹

There are varying views as to the relationship of ergon to man's nature. Georg Bertram claims that "every thing called ergon in the life of man is sin."² On the other end of the spectrum stands R. H. Charles who claims that erga "stand for the moral character as a whole, and are not in their essence outward at all though they lead of necessity to outward acts."³ J. Massyngberde Ford is in agreement with Charles when she states that

"the meaning of works is ambiguous . . . because the Law is not specifically discussed in Revelation and this would lead one to surmise that works entail more than ritual observance or supererogatory works or good deeds, Charles is probably right in saying that the author simply points to the manifestation of the inner life and character of the saints. . . . "⁴

In part one, we trace ergon to its basic usages both in the LXX and in the NT outside Revelation. This study includes an analysis of the range of meaning of the

¹Ibid., p. clxix.

²Georg Bertram, "Ergon," TDNT, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964-1976), 2:644.

³R. H. Charles, Commentary on Revelation, p. cxv.

⁴J. Massyngberde Ford, Revelation, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1975), p. 249.

word group as represented in its basic verbal and substantival forms (ergazesthai and ergon), plus the other variations such as ergasia, ergasimos, ergatēs, ergodiōktein, and euergeteō. Special attention is given to the word group as used in the Gospel of John, since this study accepts John, the Son of Zebedee, as the author of both the Gospel and Revelation. Finally, the word group as used in the Apocalypse itself is scrutinized with classification into pertinent categories that highlight the kinds of works (good and evil) and nuances or variations with respect to these kinds of works.

Several motifs that emerge in connection with ergon receive necessary attention as well. These include the covenant motif (which is prominent in Revelation, since only the covenant relationship with God provides the power for the saints to do good works), miracles as "works" in the Johannine literature (here, the Gospel in contrast to the Apocalypse), etc. However, since the study is confined to the ergon word group, analysis of its major synonym poieō ("do," "make") is omitted. Also this study relates to ethical applications of ergon, and, therefore, the common usages of the word as meaning "labor" (Exod 20:9; Lev 23:31; Mark 13:34), "tilling the earth" (Gen 2:5; 4:12), "service in the sanctuary" (Num 8:11,19), and "forced labor" (Exod 5:4; 6:9) are mentioned only in passing.

In part two, five studies will apply the understanding of ergon in the book of Revelation. These

studies are designed for members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The topics are as follows: (1) Works as the Fruit of the Covenant Relationship; (2) Good Works; (3) Evil Works; (4) Judgment According to Works; and (5) Miracles Versus Works.

PART ONE

THEOLOGICAL STUDY

CHAPTER I

ANALYSIS OF ERGON IN THE LXX

The following analysis of ergon gives a brief summary of the detailed treatment of the word found in appendix 1.

The majority of references to the ergon word group in the LXX deal with the exterior behavior and action of man such as labor (Gen 3:17; Lev 23:25--used 156 times) slavery (Exod 5:4; 6:9--used 16 times) workmanship in producing objects for the sanctuary (Exod 27:4; 38:25--used 79 times) and the work of serving the sanctuary (Num 4:39; 8:11--used 62 times). The above usages are found predominantly in the books from Genesis to Nehemiah. Ergon is rarely used in its ethical sense in these books. It is simply understood as "work" or "labor."

From Job through the end of the OT however, ergon is predominantly used in its ethical sense. The Psalmist laments the wickedness of his people in adopting the erga of the heathen (Ps 105[106]:39). The prophets cry out against the works of iniquity of God's people (Isa 59:6). They plead with Israel to refrain from worshiping strange Gods and creating them by works of their hands (Jer 25:6). Therefore when ergon is applied to man the emphasis of the

word group is on ethical behavior not ethical impulses or even "character" as such. In other words the objective manifestation is paramount.

Works in reference to man can be divided into two main categories: good works and evil works. God declares that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen 8:21) implying that man's inherent tendencies are evil. For this reason evil works are cited seventy-three times far outweighing the mention of good works which are mentioned twenty-one times. Ergon need not be regularly and consistently taken to mean sin in the life of man as suggested by Georg Bertram,¹ rather it depends on the context indicating whether the deed is a good or evil one.

Evil people are often termed "workers of iniquity" in the LXX as well as by Jesus in the NT. "Workers of iniquity" are not sorcerers as the term is understood by Mowinkel rather the phrase describes those whose deeds are evil. One of the common evil works of the Israelites was idolatry; those within the covenant relationship with Yahweh did not commit this evil. While evil deeds are done in rebellion against God good deeds are performed under divine direction, bringing rewards with them. The righteous will attain peace as a result of

¹See appendix 1 for further discussion.

their works, while the evil will receive the judgment of destruction.

When ergon has reference to God, it can describe the work of the Creator. From the beginning there is a unity between the word which spoke the world into existence and the "work" which fashioned it. At Gen 2:2 ergon is used three times to describe the creative work from which God rests, giving man an example to rest from his labors as well. Every day of creation corroborates God's power. Prophets such as Isaiah have confidence in God for their salvation because God is also their Creator. His creatorship gives Him the power to be their Savior.

God acts in history, His salvation takes place here on earth. God is in control of history as is demonstrated by His ability to destroy and regenerate nations. God's permissive power allows nations to rise to prominence and then disappear into obscurity.

God also acts in the realm of the miraculous. The miracles which are given the greatest emphasis in the OT are the plagues of Egypt and the subsequent salvation of Israel from Egyptian bondage by the supernatural parting of the waters of the Red Sea. Miracles have a voice (Exod 4:8) and are given as a sign so that their mission may be clearly understood. Miracles authenticated the ministry of Moses, certifying that he was sent by God. They also served to bring the faith of Moses to maturity.

One of God's acts is judgment, for which ergon is

prominently used. Since God is characteristically merciful, judgment is His strange work. The erga of God can be forceful displays of power so that the Israelites are filled with awe and amazement.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF ERGON IN THE NT

The following analysis of ergon gives a brief summary of the detailed treatment of the word found in appendix 2.

The word group ergon is used 232 times in the NT. The predominant usages are good deeds (forty-eight times), evil deeds (thirty times), miracles (twenty-three times), labor (twenty-one times), works of the law (nineteen times), works of faith (seventeen times), ministry (eleven times), undecided deeds (eight times), judgment of God (seven times), works of the flesh (six times), creation (five times), God's acts (four times), and production of an item (three times).

While the predominant usage of ergon in the NT is good works, the predominant usage of ergon in the LXX is labor in the sense of work (313 times); 141 usages deal with labor which is done in connection with the sanctuary (workmanship performed in the production of sanctuary furniture and appurtenances used 141 times, but service in the sanctuary 62 times). When ergon, however, is used in an ethical sense in the LXX, evil deeds are noted in a

ratio more than three to one (seventy-three evil deeds versus twenty-one good deeds). In the LXX ergon is chiefly applied in its good sense in a general way while in the NT specific examples are chosen for their good works such as the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:38) Dorcas (Acts 9:36), and Gaius (3 John 5). Dorcas is declared to have a full measure of good works. Paul gives advice to Timothy that women should exchange proper behavior for the exterior jewelry that they wore. Further Paul admonishes Timothy that Scripture equips the believer for "every good work" (2 Tim 3:17) which means a Christian is brought to a suitable state of moral action. Good works are to be encouraged (Heb 10:24) and their ultimate goal is to be the glory of God (1 Peter 2:12).

In the book of John Christ's erga describe His ministry for men; the word is predominantly used in the sense of miracles. These miracles are performed to authenticate Christ's ministry as well as to provide a concrete base upon which to build the faith of Christ's followers. There is a close relationship between Christ's words and works. In John as well as the Septuagint works inherently are neutral in moral value. The word takes on a positive or negative connotation depending on the context in which it is used. If the Jews choose as their father the devil, then they are evil; if they accept the Father who works so intimately with Jesus, they are righteous. This volition is crucial; therefore Jesus

stated: "We must work the works of him who sent me" (John 9:4). Works in John are never done in a legalistic vacuum, rather they are done within a personal relationship which is emphasized by the concept of knowing.

Christ came to do the will of His Father; this was His purpose and His desire. In the Gospel the activity of the Father is characterized as work; the works of Jesus are done in cooperation with the Father. The ergon of God comes from the view of the God in the OT who continues His activity of creation, as miracles, judgments, and His acts of salvation. These works show the unity of the Father working with the Son. Even the Jews acknowledged the excellent nature of Christ's works; but they brought the accusation of blasphemy against Him for they recognized the claim of working to be a shared experience with the Father, and therefore a claim on the part of Christ to be equal with God.

Doing the works of God need not be considered in the legalistic sense since the term is used in the majority of instances in John as the miracles of Jesus; three texts indicate a positive attitude by Jesus toward erga (John 3:19-21; 5:27-29; 8:39-47). In His high-priestly prayer Jesus claimed He had finished the work God had assigned Him to do (17:4). Here there is no negative connotation. Since ergon is united with the word pisteuō at John 6:29 ("This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent"), there is a connection between the

two words. Barrett sees the verb pisteuō used almost synonymously with ginoskein ("to know"). Knowing in the OT refers to a personal relationship. In John knowing is used in a covenantal sense of a trustful relationship with Christ. A result of this intimate relationship is obedience, since no intimate relationship can exist for any length of time without true harmony existing between the individuals involved.

The source of strength to accomplish the erga comes from the covenant relationship with Christ. The Last Discourse of Jesus in John 13-17 is a covenant meal. At the heart of the discourse is chapter 15 which deals with Jesus as the True Vine. It is union with Him that salvation has made possible. Here in chapter 15 the covenant relationship of the OT now gains strong intimacy in connection with the Messiah. The allegory of the vine presents Jesus as the True Vine, God as the cultivator, and the disciples as the branches. The quality of the disciples' life-style is determined by their fruitfulness. It is only when believers remain (menō) in Christ that there is any permanence to this relationship. The condition for remaining in Christ's love is the keeping of the commandments. John does not allow love to degenerate into insipid emotionalism or sentimentalism; it is a principle which is always moral and expressed through obedience. The covenantal relationship between Jesus and His disciples depends upon their reciprocal love

relationship. Their love relationship will not only result in the keeping of the commandments, but assistance is available from the Paraclete (14:16).

The covenantal relationship is made possible through the medium of faith. Jesus has a perfect vertical relationship with His Father so we can have a similar vertical relationship with the Father through Christ, and a corresponding horizontal relationship with mankind through the Savior.

In the NT all good works are ultimately considered God's work done through men. Works are an evidence of faith. For Paul, works of the law have become self-righteous acts and have acquired a negative sense. Works are understood within a Christian standard or context and are performed on the basis of faith and love.

The sanctified life is moral improvement and good deeds motivated and activated by the Holy Spirit and aimed toward the honor and glory of God. Ergon, in its positive sense, fits this description, since we have discovered that it denotes action and achievement. The works are accomplished through faith in Christ working through love.

CHAPTER III

ERGON AS USED IN REVELATION

The Authorship of the Gospel of John and Revelation

This paper assumes John the son of Zebedee to be the author of Revelation and the Gospel of John. This is a disputed question. Some scholars accept John the Son of Zebedee as the author of the Gospel of John¹ others believe he wrote the book of Revelation² while a few

¹Dominic Crossan, The Gospel of Eternal Life (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1967), p. 4; and Merrill C. Tenney, John: The Gospel of Belief (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), p. 301.

²Robert Mounce, NICNT (The Book of Revelation [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977], p. 31) in a "tentative way" accepts Revelation written by John the apostle. Albert Barnes (Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Book of Revelation [New York: Harper & Bros. Pub., 1858], p. xvii) accepts Johannine authorship on the basis of the testimony of the church fathers extending to the end of the second century. Herman Hoeksema, Behold, He Cometh! (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Reformed Free Pub. Assn., 1969), p. 2.

believe he wrote both.¹ Added to the varying opinions about authors there also is a diversity as to the date of authorship of the Gospel of John and Revelation.²

Ergon in Revelation as Understood by R. H. Charles and J. Massyngbearde Ford

The term "works" is misunderstood by Charles and Ford. They miss the focus presented by the LXX and the NT which definitely emphasize the exterior behavior of man. The viewpoint of R. H. Charles concerning works in

¹William Milligan, The Book of Revelation (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1896), pp. 3-5. R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), p. 13, unequivocally accepts John as the author of the gospel by stating: "The inner evidence for John's authorship is so convincing that it has been likened to solid granite." He also accepts John as the author of Revelation. Idem, The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1943), pp. 27, 28.

²Many scholars believe Revelation was written written around A.D. 96 (Francis D. Nichol, ed., "Introduction: Historical Study," SDABC, 7 vols. [Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Pub. Assn., 1957]). Henry Barclay Swete (The Apocalypse of St. John [London: MacMillan & Co., 1906], p. civ) has chosen A.D. 90-96. C. K. Barrett (The Gospel According to St. John [London: S.P.C.K., 1965], p. 108) states that John appeared between A.D. 90-140. Barrett, however, is speaking of the date of publication and not the writing. Raymond E. Brown (The Gospel According to John, 2 vols. AB [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1966], 1:1xxx) follows the general opinion that John was written A.D. 100-110. J. H. Bernard (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, 2 vols., ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928], 1:1xxviii) has stated that the date for the Gospel can hardly be earlier than A.D. 90 and cannot be later than A.D. 125. He has decided on A.D. 95 as the nearest approximate date. W. F. Albright ("The Bible after Twenty Years of Archaeology," Religion in Life 21 (1952):550. said "there is no reason to date the Gospel after A.D. 90; it may be earlier."

Revelation is that they do not relate to the Mosaic law or the commandments of God but they stand for moral character as a whole. He states his opinion in the following manner:

But what does our author mean by "works"? These are not observances of the Mosaic Law since our author never mentions it and nowhere admits of any obligation arising from it. Nor does it mean isolated fulfilments (sic) even of the commandments of God or of Christ. They stand for the moral character as a whole and are not in their essence outward at all though they lead of necessity to outward acts. But so far as they issue in outward acts they are regarded by our author simply as the manifestation of the inner life and character.¹

He introduces Rev 2:2 as evidence of this thesis by stating that "the 'works' of the Church of Ephesus are defined as consisting in 'labour and endurance'. The first of these is certainly manifest."² Rather than substantiating his argument by referring to Rev 2:2 he weakens it since "labor" (kopos)

in prose is the proper word for physical tiredness induced by work exertion or heat. Expressing severe labour it is synon. with ponos, which signifies the most tense or strenuous effort e.g., of the soldier in battle or the exertions of messengers or manual workers.³

Further understanding of the word kopos weakens Charles' argument for it means (1) "to tire" and (2) "to make great exertions" "to wear oneself out" whether

¹ Charles, Commentary on Revelation, 1:cxv.

² Ibid.

³ Friedrich Hauck, "Kopos," TDNT, 10 vols. eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 3:827-28.

through physical or mental effort. In the LXX kopos is a fixed term in OT piety. It is common with ponos (Jer 20:18; Hab 1:3). A "realistic pessimism" is outlined in the OT, since life is quite largely made of oppressive labor and sorrow (Ps 89:10).¹ In the NT kopianō is used in the sense "to weary" (John 4:6). It is also used in the sense "to tire oneself out" (Matt 6:28; Luke 5:5; Eph 4:28).

It appears that Charles contradicts his assertion that works "in their essence are not outward at all." Since kopos and erga stand in apposition to each other, erga has the properties of kopos, which in turn has the essential meaning of strenuous physical and mental effort. Even strenuous mental effort can be observed in one's facial expression. Charles is arguing contrary to the basic meaning of the word which in both the OT and NT emphasizes the exterior qualities, the good or evil deed which in its essence can be observed in the conduct of man. He states that "the 'works of Jesus', 2:26, are those which originate in faithfulness to Jesus."² It would seem that faithfulness would not only be based on one's "moral character" but would be demonstrated externally in one's performance.

The very word "labour" (kopos), which Charles uses to argue against the performance of outward works,

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

proves to be a strong counter argument, viz., effort which is essentially seen in the behavior of man. The essential meaning of ergon is practical work performed by laborers. In the moral sphere, it is the conduct of a person which is noted on the exterior. Commentators, such as Martin Luther,¹ Charles Hodge,² Sanday and Headlam,³ when exegeting Rom. 2:6, consider erga to be deeds. The good works of Ephesus can be noted in their opposition to false teachers. This is outward opposition and not some internal psychological drama. False doctrines, as are taught by the heretical sect of the Nicolaitans⁴ (Rev 2:6), are expressed through the spoken or written word. Only when ideas are expressed openly do they become false doctrines, otherwise they are simply meditative musings of the mind. Christ hates the erga of the Nicolaitans precisely because their false teachings are public acts which

¹Martin Luther, Commentary on Romans (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Pub., 1954), p. 56.

²Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Edinburgh: Turnbull & Spears, Printers, 1864), p. 49.

³William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), p. 57.

⁴Friedrich D sterdieck who refers to Terutllian who believed the Nicolaitans were Gnostics admits this has no foundation. He believes they were ethnicizing libertines (Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John, Meyer's Commentary, trans. Henry E. Jacobs [New York: Funk & Wagnalls Pub., 1887], p. 135). George Eldon Ladd considers the Nicolaitans as an unknown heretical sect (A Commentary on the Revelation of John [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972], p. 40).

bring dissension and apostasy into the church. Also diakonia is a service we render to our brother which can only mean an outward service of some kind.

We have noted the victorious Christians in Thyatira have a resolute adherence to the "works of Christ" which refers to the purity of the Christian life. This is opposed to "the works of Jezebel" which include committing fornication and eating food offered to idols (Rev 2:20). These are definitely outward acts.

God's works are also exterior works e.g. creation and deliverance. This reinforces the concept that works are essentially outward acts though God is able to read the heart and determine the motives which created the outward act (Jer 17:10).

Hyprocrisy such as was rampant in Sardis, is a visible exterior phenomenon since "works are the index of faith."¹ The same is true of apathy in Laodicea the heresies of the Nicolaitans, and the complete rebellion of those who were killed by the plagues (Rev 9:20 21). John in his first epistle (1 John 4:20) clearly states that mouthing words of devotion to God falls short of a living relationship with Him; actions must follow conviction to prove it genuine.

All the above clearly indicate that Charles'

¹John Bright, The Kingdom of God (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 221.

definition of works as not being essentially outward is erroneous. It does not bear up under investigation.

Charles concludes that "works are regarded by our author simply as the manifestation of the inner life and character"¹ and that works are "a manifestation of character and are in fact synonymous with character . . ."² He uses the example of Rev 2:2 in which he explains that "the omission of sou (you) after t. kopon ("labour") binds t. kopon and t. hupomonēn together."³ Here he fails to take into account that kopos expresses severe labor and physical tiredness. He is emphatic concerning defining the first kai as epexegetical. In that case kopos defines works not synonymous with character but a reflection of character a result of character. One could put it another way ergon describes the work of the character. Some works are performed out of character. One may commit a deed as a result of anger or frustration. The motive for such an action may be a temporary one. Therefore works cannot be synonymous with character. Rather works are an outgrowth of character.

Charles implies that works are an automatic reaction to the inner life and character. According to him works are an emanation without a conscious responsive action. Each person being an individual, responds in a

¹Charles, Commentary on Revelation, 1:372.

²Ibid., 1:373.

³Ibid., 1:372.

unique way. Charles fails to consider the individual will. Love is the catalyst but specific acts of adoration are willed responses to the privileges accorded us in the covenant relationship. Works are an indispensable evidence of a man's ethical decisions. Without works human experience is frustrated. A believer has not established a belief until he reveals himself by his acts. Works express the individuality of the believer and are a distillation of the covenant experience.

There is a general tendency to either ignore or overlook the law and ethical standards in the book of Revelation. Some commentators fail to see outward performance of deeds when interpreting the word ergon. J. Massyngherde Ford brings this to the fore when stating that "the meaning of works is ambiguous . . . because the Law is not specifically discussed in Revelation and this would lead to surmise that works entail more than ritual observance or supererogatory works or good deeds . . ."¹

Both Charles and Ford ignore the fact that at least nine of the Ten Commandments are dealt with in Revelation and that ergon may well include obedience to the law: (1) The First Commandment against the worship of other gods (9:20-21; 21:8; 22:15); (2) The Second Commandment against idol worship here worshipping the image of the beast (13:15-17; 9:20,21); (3) The Third

¹J. M. Ford, Revelation, p. 249.

Commandment forbidding blasphemy (13:5-6; 16:9-11); (4) The Fourth Commandment honoring the Creator (through the keeping of the Sabbath 14:7; cf. seal of God in 7:3-4; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4); the Lord's Day (1:10) as the Sabbath cf. Mark 2:28; (5) The Sixth Commandment: against murder (9:21; 21:8; 22:15); (6) The Seventh Commandment against adultery here Jezebel's adultery (2:22), Babylon "the great whore" (17:1-5; 18:7,23), and adultery as a category of lost sinners (21:8); (7) The Eighth Commandment against stealing (9:21); (8) The Ninth Commandment against lying (14:5; 21:8,27; 22:5); (9) The Tenth Commandment against coveteousness (18:14).

These obvious texts which refer to specific commandments seem to have been overlooked. Ford has made an erroneous conclusion in not noting the emphasis of the law in Revelation. As a result of her incorrect conclusion, Ford does not wish to relegate "works" to "ritual observance or supererogatory works or good deeds" and so considers them something "more," quoting Charles who understands erga to be "the manifestation of the inner life and character of the saints."¹ Charles himself, though denying the mention of the Mosaic Law in Revelation, admits that though "works" stand for the moral character they issue of necessity in "outward acts."² There is a contradiction of terms here. Either character

¹Ibid.

²Charles, Commentary on Revelation, 1:cxv.

and outward acts are exclusive of each other or they are inseparably united. Ford cannot set forth works as excluding good deeds and at the same time claim that erga are "the manifestation of the inner life and character of the saints."¹ How else can character be manifested except through good deeds. When the law is ignored as clearly stated or alluded to in the above list one asks the obvious question, what is the a priori understanding of the writer which leads to the conclusions reached? Is it possible that both Charles and Ford emphasize justification to the minimizing or exclusion of sanctification?

Good Works

This study divides the twenty occurrences of ergon in Revelation into two basic sections: (1) good works and (2) evil works. An attempt has been made to examine each use of the word "works" in its context.

Good works are possible only because of the Christological emphasis set forth in the the book of Revelation. That is to say, it is because of Christ's justification of the ungodly (Rom 4:5) through a covenant relationship that good works appear in the believer. Since Christ has won the victory over Satan and his allies for Himself and His followers (Rev 17:14), He rightfully can claim the name King of Kings and Lord of Lords

¹J. M. Ford, Revelation, p. 249.

(19:16). For this reason the saints, being co-regents with him (Rev 1:6; 20:4), have the sustained hope that their good works will continue to endure (Rev 19:7-8).

Love--the motive for good works

In order to understand how agapē ("love") qualifies as prōta erga ("first works"), notice of some background material concerning love in John's Gospel adds to its understanding in Revelation. During the Last Discourse in the Gospel of John, Jesus Christ offered to the disciples a "new commandment," that they were to love one another (John 13:34).

Love plays an important function in the Gospel and the epistles of John. Agapaō, agapē, and phileō are used in the following ratio in the following NT books:

	Matt	Mark	Luke	John 1	John	Rev
<u>Agapē</u> and <u>Agapaō</u>	9	6	14	44	46	6
<u>Phileō</u>	5	1	2	13	0	2

The chart demonstrates agape as a predominant theme in the Johannine literature compared with the Synoptic Gospels. Though the theme of "works" and keeping God's commandments is accented in the Johannine literature, it is usually presented within the context of God's merciful love. Love is called a new commandment in John (13:34; 15:12,17). The new emphasis according to G.

Schrenk "is its new christological foundation."¹ Jesus declared that the wine they drank around the supper table was the "blood of the covenant" (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). It is vital to note that the kainē diathēkē, "new covenant" (Luke 22:20) implies there was an old covenant. The ethical standards which Jesus proclaimed were found in the new commandment. R. Percival Brown sees an inseparable union between the old and new covenant as follows:

I conclude that the entolē Kainē (new commandment) of which the Lord speaks is the kainē diatheke (new covenant). . . . The covenant is an act of grace. God in His goodness promises to dispense His mercies, but requires a definite response from man. A commandment is therefore necessarily inherent in a covenant of grace.²

Raymond E. Brown goes to the heart of the matter in seeing the centrality of the covenant motif in the word agapē.

The newness of the commandment of love is really related to the theme of covenant at the Last Supper--the "new commandment" of John 13:34 is the basic stipulation of the "new covenant" of Luke 22:20. Both expressions reflect the early Christian understanding that in Jesus and his followers was fulfilled the dream of Jeremiah (xxxi 31-34): "Behold the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah." . . . This new covenant was to be interiorized and to be marked by the people's intimate contact with God and knowledge of Him--a

¹G. Schrenk, "Entolē," TDNT, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 2:553.

²R. Percival Brown, "Entolē Kainē (Saint John 13:34)," Theology 26 (April 1933):191.

knowledge that is the equivalent of love and is a covenantal virtue.¹

Anders Nygren notes that "the very fact that He (God) had established His Covenant and given His Law, was the supreme expression of His love."² Gottfried Quell concludes that "the concept of love is the ultimate foundation of the whole covenant theory."³ It is God's faithfulness in spite of man's unfaithfulness that demonstrates the true glory of God's love for His people. God's election of Israel was not motivated because they were great in number (Deut 7:6-10), but because of His election and covenant promise to them. Prior to this command Israelite loved Israelite because of their common heritage through Abraham, but now love was to be based on Christ. This love is new because a new Christian family is born as Jesus states this maxim. It is not based on human love, but on the love of Christ. Kathos ("according to the manner in which," John 13:34) is more than a comparison; rather, it designates a conformity to Christ's love.⁴

Love then, is the Christian's motive for works, while faith is the instrument which reaches to God to

¹R. E. Brown, John, 2:614.

²Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 71.

³Gottfried Quell, "Agapao," TDNT, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 1:27.

⁴Mounce, Revelation, p. 278.

sustain them. Love has purpose. It is not something which exists in a vacuum. Its purpose is revealed in outward actions. For this reason we read in Rev 2:19, "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first."

The churches of Ephesus and Thyatira appear to be the opposite of each other in reference to love. In Ephesus there is much desire for traditional doctrine, but little love; in Thyatira there is much love but carelessness about false doctrine.

The good works in Thyatira are introduced with the exegetical use of kai (Rev 2:19). The works of agapē and pistis ("love" and "faith") are the motives for Christian activity, and diakonia ("service") and hupomōnē ("patience") provide the characteristic results. Minear has expanded the meaning of hupomōnē by defining it as endurance:

Endurance connoted not only the stubborn refusal to give in under fire, but also the alert watchfulness against deception, the eagerness to make one's testimony credible to the enemies, the keen discernment of the inner roots of fear and anxiety, the readiness to forgive, and the joy discovered within the vortex of pain. Much more than sheer physical stamina was indicated; a person and a congregation could share in the stamina of Jesus only by exemplifying that strength which he demonstrated on the via dolorosa. Only thus could his testimony under fire be confirmed by their testimony to him. Such were the bonds which bound John to his readers and bound them all to Jesus.

¹Paul S. Minear, I Saw a New Earth (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), p. 24.

As sanctification is a progressive development in holy living, so here we find that the deeds of this church have progressed. They have not stood still. Some claim to be Christians while their deeds of yesterday are the same as today; there is stagnation. There is a danger of death (Rev 3:2). However, in Thyatira faith has grown, and it has been warmed by love. Unless this love and faith are nurtured they will die. "The more we lose ourselves and feel ourselves to be but instruments in Christ's hands, the more we seek to fill our lives with all noble service" ¹

In the case of Ephesus, love is the first work which must be recovered. It is to be done in repentance (Rev. 2:4). Here the emphasis is upon the initial love at conversion. It was this fruit which made the Ephesian church so commendable in the beginning. It is not clear whether this is love for Christ as a personal Saviour, love for one another, or for mankind in general. Leon Morris thinks it may well be that a general attitude is meant which includes all three. ² Agapē is a value-creating principle. ³ Thus one can more clearly see that when love is the motivational force in a Christian's life,

¹Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture, 11 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959), 11:221.

²Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1969), p. 60.

³Nygren, Agape and Eros, p. 78.

good works are the result. Roy Allan Anderson is correct in saying "Works do not produce love nor can they take the place of love. Works are only the evidence of love."¹

The Ephesian church is asked to remember (mnēmoneue) the heights from which it has fallen (Rev 2:5). This refers back to the first love it had for its Lord whom it has forgotten. The present imperative mnēmoneue ("remember") indicates a continuing attitude of remembering and is in contrast to the aorist imperative metanoēsōn ("repent") indicating a decisive repentance. Repentance is to be done once and for all. The works which it is requested to do arise from its first love not from a legalistic requirement. The "coming" (erchomai) of vs. 5 refers to a special visitation, not to the Second Advent (parousia). The erga, are "more particularly, deeds as exhibiting moral character."²

The present durative imperative "remember" is to be a constant remembering which will cause it to recover. Mnēmoneue ("remember") goes back to deeds which it has performed, for one does not remember character or inward desire, but the fruit of that desire. The imperatives which follow are, according to Lenski, peremptory aorists which would call for complete repentance and a decisive commitment to perform the first works done at the

¹Roy Allan Anderson, Unfolding the Revelation (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1953), p. 17.

²"Works" [Rev 2:2], SDABC, 7:743.

beginning by the Ephesians.¹ A similar imperative appears at Matt 3:2. Metanoete ("repent") implies "turning about, conversion; as a turning away."²

The command to repent is an urgent appeal for an immediate change of attitude and conduct. The Ephesians are to do (poiēson, 1st aorist imperative) the first works which resulted from the first love. Here it probably included their undivided love for God and for their fellow men in general.

First their hearts were to be rededicated. The doctrinal controversies could have stirred up animosities. This was to be corrected. James Moffatt remarks that "the way to regain this warmth of affection is neither by working up spasmodic emotion nor by theorizing about it . . . but by doing its duties."³ Unless the church does this, God will remove the lampstands. Since the lampstands represent the seven churches, their removal would signify that "the church would forfeit its status as an accredited representative of Christ."⁴

The result of true repentance leads to "the first works." Poieō ("do," "make"), like the Hebrew 'asah (Gen

¹Lenski, St. John's Revelation, p. 88.

²William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 512.

³Moffat, p. 351 as quoted by Mounce, Revelation, p. 88.

⁴"Remove thy candlestick" [Rev 2:5], SDABC, 7:745.

1:1f), "can be used of producing fruit" (Luke 3:8,9; 6:43; 8:8; 13:9; Mark 4:32). Karpos ("fruit") often indicates a life-style expressed in deeds, whether good or evil (Ps 1:3; Jer 17:8; Acts 26:20).¹

The acts of men, as their fruits, are signs by which to know (epignōsesthe) their inner nature, Matt 7:16f. . . . Sanctification or life is the fruit which the Christian experiences as one who bears the Spirit, R. 6:22."²

In the prologue of his epistle to the Ephesians, Ignatius reports that the church obeyed the call of Jesus in Revelation by having "peacefully accomplished the work which was beseeming to you."³

Works demonstrate spiritual strength and growth

Rev 2:2 says, "I know your works." This is the usual formula with which all the epistles to the seven churches are begun. It indicates that Christ is intimately acquainted with their condition, whether good or bad. Therefore, He is eminently qualified to judge them. Friedrich D sterdieck feels that "the external activity in general, whereby the Church manifests its inner life, is designated."⁴

¹I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978), pp. 139-40.

²Hauck, "Karpos," TDNT, 3:615.

³Ignatius The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians 1.1.4 (ANF 1:49).

⁴D sterdieck, Revelation of John, p. 31.

The works which Christ knows are not necessarily separate acts, but, rather, an overall life-style. The two nouns which follow, kopos and hupomone ("toil" and "patience"), give the active and passive angles of this manner of living which makes up the sanctified life. One can make a comparison with 1 Thess 1:3, but here kopos and hupomone are coordinated with and not subordinated to ergon. Hupomone "does not mark merely the endurance . . . but . . . the brave patience with which the Christian contends against the various hindrances, persecutions, and temptations that befall him in his conflict with the inward and outward world"¹ during the process of sanctification.

The works in Ephesus may be seen as good works because kopos² and hupomone stand in apposition to erga (vs. 2).³ The good works of the Ephesians can be seen in their strong opposition to and their refusal to be misled by the false teachers in Ephesus (see Acts

¹Ellicot on I Thess. 1:3, quoted by Charles, Commentary on Revelation, pp. 49-50.

²Many copyists saw the close relationship of kopos to hypomone and ergon and therefore added the pronoun sou in order to coordinate it with erga and hypomonen which are qualified with sou. This is found in Aleph 041, 1, 1006, 1611, 1828, etc. See Burce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (London: United Societies, 1971), p. 731.

³Heinrich Kraft recognizes the parallelism of ergon, kopos, and hupomone and he notes the spiritual as well as the ethical emphases of these words. (Die Offenbarung des Johannes, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1974), p. 56.

20:29,30). Their good works are further identified in that they "cannot bear evil men." They "hate the works (erga) of the Nicolaitans" (2:6). The Ephesians clearly tested the Nicolaitans by their works. The "adherents of this sect appear to have taught that deeds of the flesh do not affect the purity of the soul, and consequently have no bearing on salvation."¹ The church well understood the necessity of testing works (1 Thess 5:21; 1 Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:1). Christ taught His disciples, "you will know them by their fruits" (Matt 7:20). This clearly required judgment of outward actions by which the inward character of the Nicolaitans became known.

In a book written to strengthen faith, the emphasis in these letters on works is noteworthy. Works are the criterion of the genuineness of faith, alike in the last judgment and in this time of judgment, hence the persistent demand for works of faith. Works . . . toil and . . . patient endurance are a traditional Christian triad (cf. 1 Thess 1:3), but in this context the works in question especially relate to toil in maintaining true faith, where false teachers are attempting to win the Ephesians to a different gospel (cf. Gal 1:6f), and endurance for Christ's name in face of temptations to quit the field.²

The works spoken of in Thyatira are not rigorous requirements which must be unwillingly fulfilled, rather, they are of diakonia ("service," Rev 2:19), which indicates that the truly justified person performs voluntary service in sanctification when working for the Lord.

There are many examples of service in the NT.

¹"Nicolaitanes" [Rev 2:8], SDABC, 7:745.

²G. R. Beasley-Murray, The Book of Revelation, New Century Bible (London: Butler & Tanner, 1974), pp. 73-74.

Angels come and minister to Jesus in the wilderness after the devil has left Him (Matt 4:11); "the Son of man came not to be served but to serve . . ." (Matt 20:28), ". . . let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:26). Douloi are slaves who do the bidding of the master, but diakonia is a service we give to our brothers. For this reason Paul could write to Philemon regarding Onesimus, asking Philemon to take him back, "no longer as a slave (doulos) but more than a slave, as a beloved brother" (adelphos, Phlm 16).

The first two works, "love and faith," are the foundation of the process of sanctification and identify the forces behind the actions (see above under "Good Works"). The last two works, "ministry and patience," are the practical results which follow and indicate a maturation within the process. The message to Thyatira is the only one where we note progress within the process of sanctification; "your latter works exceed the first" (Rev 2:19). This church experiences spiritual maturation perhaps in part due to its existing in the very midst of the blatant immorality of Jezebel and her children. The Ephesian Church, however, is advised to "do the works you did at first" (Rev 2:5), indicating that their maturation

was stunted in their departure from their former deep love of the Savior.

Works demonstrate loyalty to God

Loyalty is expressed by various attributes within the churches: (1) Ephesus has patient endurance (Rev 2:2); (2) Pergamum holds fast the name of Christ; (3) Philadelphia is loyal by not denying Christ's name (Rev 3:8); (4) Thyatira is admonished to "hold fast what you have, until I come. He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations . . . " (Rev 2:25,26). The last of the two following phrases, ho nikōn kai ho tērōn ("the one overcoming and the one keeping") is epexegetical. Therefore, it might be translated, "he that overcometh, that is to say, he that keepeth my works until the end." The victor is the one who keeps Christ's works. Loyalty requires faithful allegiance to Christ and His great gift of salvation. It is an inherent part of the continuing process of sanctification which consists in living after the pattern of the Great Example.

At Thyatira the battle was to be won by resolute adherence to the "works of Christ," i.e., to the purity of the Christian life, as opposed to the "works of Jezebel" (Rev 2:22, ta erga autes). Terein (a Johannine word, John 8:51; 1 John 2:3; Rev 14:12) is usually followed by ton logon or tas entolas: ta erga presents the same thought in a concrete form (cf. Jo. 6:28 ta erga tou Theou). "Works" are, in these addresses to the Churches, constantly used as the test of character; cf. 2:2, 5f., 19, 22f., 3:1f., 8, 15. Archri telous corresponds with achri ou an exo v. 25; cf. . . .

"Triumph here consists in unflagging attention to the duties of a Christian vocation."² My works are in opposition to "her works." "It is a different quality of life that is demanded from the Christian."³ "Until the end" alerts us to the fact that this struggle is not a skirmish but a war.

The Philadelphian Church has set before it "an open door, which no one is able to shut . . . " (Rev 3:8). The "door" may represent "unlimited opportunity for personal victory in the struggle with sin, and for bearing witness to the saving truth of the gospel."⁴ The process of sanctification opens unlimited doors of opportunity unknown to the unsanctified person. "Door" is used

¹Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John, p. 45.
(London: MacMillan & Co., 1906), p. 45.

²W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., The Expositor's Greek Testament, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1961), 5:362.

³L. Morris, St. John, p. 74.

⁴"An open door" [Rev 3:8], SDABC, 7:758.

several times in this manner (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3).

In the Philadelphia Church Christ is portrayed as ho alēthinos ("the true one"); He is dependable. In the Gospel of John truth is not seen by meditation in the Hellenistic sense, but it is heard (John 8:40). Wisdom in the OT speaks to the man who listens; wisdom is a personification of God. At Rev 3:8 Christ the "true one" presents an "open door" to the believers. Brown is closer to the truth when he states that "the primary influence on John was Judaism, and not Gnosticism nor Hellenistic thought."¹

Many commentators consider the open door to be an opportunity for missionary effort.² The saints would have something to witness about since they can depend upon the alēthinos ("the true one"). The door here, then, is for the extension of one's self-actualization in Jesus Christ, and the preaching of the gospel to the outside world. The Philadelphia Church, in spite of its lack of power, kept Christ's word and, therefore, it will have the opportunity of giving to others the good news of the gospel.

¹R. E. Brown, John, 1:500.

²Charles, Commentary on Revelation, 1:87; Lenski, St. John's Revelation, p. 139; A. Plummer, The Pulpit Commentary, 52 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., n.d.), p. 110.

The Works of God

The works of deliverance

The works of God in Revelation demonstrate God's part in salvation. At Rev 15:3 (where the Song of Moses speaks of the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians), God's deeds (erga) are described as "great and wonderful." Revelation does not identify good works in detail. This is accomplished by John in his Gospel and by other writers in the OT and NT as is developed in chaps. 1 and 2. Revelation does not mention doing good to your enemies (Matt 5:44), the evil of hoarding money (Matt 6:19-21), tithing one's finances (Mal 3:10), assisting those who are poor (Matt 25:34-36; Jas 1:27), or providing hospitality to the saints (Rom 12:13). Beatrice Neall correctly notes that works in Revelation are set in a context of persecution and death in which the disciples are to be faithful.¹ The Song of Moses contains many allusions to OT phrases which describe God's marvelous works (Ps 139:14; 111:3, 4). The hosts of Israel were in great perplexity. The sea was before them and the mighty Egyptian army was behind them expecting to triumph over the helpless assembly. Yahweh alone brought them

¹Beatrice Neall places the topic of works in a study in which she analyzes the book of Revelation as a study of character development. ("The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse with Implications for Character Development" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1981), p. 144.

deliverance, and to Him they gave praise in singing. The SDABC points out that thaumastos ("marvelous") works (15:3) refers back to thaumastos of 15:1 which applies to the seven last plagues.

We find God's people delivered from the plagues which parallel the deliverance of God's people from Egypt. This portion begins the eschatological section, according to Kenneth Strand's chiastic structure of the book of Revelation. The "Exodus from Egypt/Fall of Babylon Motif C(a)" is developed here.¹ God's people have been placed under the blood on the door posts and, therefore, they are delivered from the seven last plagues which destroy the enemies of God, who are represented by Babylon (Rev 14:8).

Though ergon is used twenty times in Revelation, only four times is it verbally used in connection with God. The majority of uses of ergon (sixteen usages) apply to man's part in sanctification. This is in accordance with the prophetic messages in the OT. The use of qāshabh ("be attentive") and shama^C ("heed") indicates that man is to do the listening while God defines their sins which have caused, or will cause, retribution from Him (cf. Jer 6:17,19; Judg 9:7; Jer 25:4). God pleads with men to listen to him and change their ways. The cry goes forth from prophet to prophet in words such as the following: "Listen to me, my people, and give ear to me,

¹Kenneth A. Strand, Interpreting the Book of Revelation (Naples, FL: Ann Arbor Pub., 1976), pp. 51-52.

my nation; for a law will go forth from them, and my justice for a light to the peoples." Unfortunately God's people did not listen to His voice (Jer 7:24,26; Eze 3:7; 20:8; Zech 1:4).

It is not God who must change (Mal 3:6), rather man must repent of his sins (Matt 3:2). In mercy God points out man's sins and urges him to change his ways. If God offers only mercy so that man may be justified, man will have no desire to change his ways. God must create a desire within man and empower him to keep His commands. Thus the Bible is filled with invitations from God to do His will (Jer 11:4; 38:20; Zech 6:15), for He makes His will possible.

Since men outside of Christ are willful sinners (Rom 3:12), there is no advantage in approaching them with mercy alone; rather, men must be shown their sins in transgressing His Holy Law so they can clearly see them. It is not until man can discern his evil ways that he will have any reason for altering his course. This is the reason Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Sadducees before His death. He railed against their sins (Matt 23:27-30; Luke 12:42-44); this was His final attempt to reach them. He was beyond the point of mincing words. Not only were they told of their great sins, but their teachings kept back those who were entering the kingdom of heaven (Matt 23:13). Though His denunciations may not have brought conversion to the Sadducees and Pharisees, it

definitely caused the people to take note of their wrongdoings and to free themselves from the traditions which had bound them.

Judgment according to works

God in judgment pronounces the final fate of each believer. The final basis of the decision is the believers' works. Only God knows the motives which produce the works. For this reason God judges the Thyatira church by saying: ". . . and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind (nephrous) and heart (kardias), and I will give to each of you as your works deserve" (Rev 2:23).

The Thyatira members are aware, on the basis of the OT, that the Lord tries the minds and hearts (Ps 7:9), proves them (Ps 26:2), and tests them as gold (Zech 13:9). The verb ereunaō (2:23) "has the common sense of 'thorough investigation,' . . ."¹

Nothing more definitely applies to God than the ability to search the heart. It is only possible on the part of God, no one else can do this. The word nephros (vs. 23) literally means kidney, but in Scripture "it is used to denote the inmost mind, the secrets of the

¹Gerhard Delling, "Ereunao," TDNT, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964-76), 2:656.

soul. . . ." ¹ Here we note God's acquaintance with man's life and sins, whether a sin of thought or deed.

Through Jeremiah God expressed in the clearest terms the principle of divine judgment: "I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doing" (Jer 17:10). It is restated both by Jesus ("the Son of man . . . will repay every man for what he has done," Matt 16:27) and by Paul ("He will render to every man according to his works," Rom 2:6).

Though judgment by God (Rev 2:23) makes a determination of motives, He makes the final decision on the basis of outward deeds because the basic meaning of erga requires this. In this instance we see God's part in judgment unfold, which is the decision as to the validity of a person's Christian experience.

The judgment, as described in Rev 20:12,13 is clearly based on the works of men: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done." These verses are parallel to Rom 2:6, "For he will render to

¹Barnes, Notes on Revelation, p. 106.

every man according to his works." The Scriptures are clear that men will be judged by what they have done.

John sees all classes of people standing before the throne. The books are opened including the book of life. "We are saved by grace, but character at last (according to their works) is the test as the fruit of the tree. . . ." ¹ The book of life forms a register of those who will receive eternal life. The figure of books containing a record of man's career was a realistic expression of Jewish belief in moral retribution, which prevailed especially in eschatological literature after the exile (e.g., Jubil. xxx.; Enoch lxxxix.-xc.; Dan vii. 10, etc.).

Everyone from Adam on stands before the judgment throne; therefore, the "great and small" are mentioned (20:12). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). Lenski asks a valid question: ". . . if the books contain a record of the works of all the dead, will they not contain also the bad works which the godly have done as well as their good works?" He considers that the books contain only the righteous deeds since the wicked deeds have been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. For this

¹A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 6 vols. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1933), 6:464.

reason he says, "ours is the aphesis, 'the dismissal,' 'remission', which blots out all our sins."¹

Though the book of life contains the deeds of the righteous, the other books contain the deeds of the wicked. How can they be judged from the books unless the deeds are written therein?

The following passages teach judgment according to works: Jer 17:10; Matt 16:27; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 2:23; and Rev 22:12. These texts reveal that a man will be compensated or condemned by the actual life he has lived and his true character. This teaching in Rom 2:6 does not contradict Rom 3:28, where it is stated "that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law." Paul is not contrasting works and the law, but rather between what a man really is and what he might profess to be. Works in the final judgment are the evidence of faith. Faith is proven in its reality and sincerity only by such evidence (Jas 2:18). This is the evidence which God will use to render His judgment.

Ivan Blazen has correctly pointed out that works are neither completely, nor never our accomplishment. Rather, they are possible only by the "all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ as our Savior." It is because of His dual offices of Savior and Lord that He judges us by our works. "Christ judged sin at the cross, justifies the sinner by

¹Lenski, St. John's Revelation, p. 606.

faith, and judges the justified by works."¹ Works are not to be separated from faith and grace.² The weighing of good works against evil works as the sole criterion for determining the reception of eternal life comes to us from the religion practiced in Egypt.³ In the Bible there is a unity in the concepts of grace, faith, and works.⁴

It is God who works salvation in us. It is for this reason that the "great multitude" of the redeemed (7:9) stand before the Lamb and give credit for their redemption to the Lord by crying out: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb" (7:10). Salvation here (hē sōtēria) is a completed act while the datives tō Theō hēmōn ("to our God") and tō arnio ("to the Lamb") credit the final salvation to God and to the Lamb. It is when the saints are filled with gratitude for the salvation that was made possible by Christ that obedience to accomplish His will comes voluntarily and cheerfully.

¹Ivan T. Blazen, "Pre-Advent Judgment and John's Judgment," Adventist Review, 25 August 1983, pp. 9-12.

²Eduard Lohse, "Glaube and Werke," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und Die Kunde der Älterenkirche 48 (1957):1-22.

³R. Heiligenthal, "Ergazomai," Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, eds. Horst Balz und Gerhard Schneider (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1981), 2:120-123.

⁴Raoul Dederen, "Sanctification and the Final Judgment," Ministry, May 1978, pp. 11-13.

Evil Works

The Forces Behind Evil Works

John in his gospel identifies the root of evil; it is the devil himself. It is because the Jews desire to kill Jesus that they are doing the works of the devil (John 8:44). Jesus may be contrasting the devil, who is "the father of lies" (John 8:44), with Himself as a "witness to the truth" (John 18:37). John strongly emphasizes Christ as speaking the truth, doing the truth, and being the truth (John 1:14,17; 3:21; 5:33; 8:40,45,46; 14:6; 16:7; 18:37). The devil, on the other hand, is a liar from the beginning (John 8:44). Here for the first time, the motif that the devil is Christ's real antagonist is presented. This theme grows in intensity in John and continues to crescendo in the last half of Revelation. The contrast is vividly presented before us; Christ is the truth, while the devil is the liar. What is involved here is not an occasional lie, but a fundamental characteristic of the devil. In Johannine dualism, lying is equivalent to darkness. It is the sphere that is opposed to truth and to the light of God.¹ The epithumiai of the devil are the evil desires, impure passions that fill the devil and indicate that he is the devil.

In Revelation we see the conflicting hierarchies do battle in heaven and on earth (chaps. 12-14). Satan leads the forces of one-third of heaven (Rev 12:4) against

¹R. E. Brown, John, 1:365.

Michael and his angels. Satan is portrayed as having fully developed his deceptions and is called "the deceiver of the whole world" (12:9). Deception is the common ingredient which holds him to his followers. The beast, one of the main agents of the devil, utters "haughty and blasphemous words" (13:5). Blasphemy has the basic thought "of violation of the power and majesty of God."¹ The beast reviles God because he desires to have the power of God and God's domain. Babylon, the city which symbolically represents the territory and the characteristics of the beast, deceives by sorcery (18:23). Sorcery (pharmakeus) has the basic meaning of "mixer of poisons." This illustrates well the completely corrupt character of Babylon which "has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit . . ." (18:2). The false prophet, another agent along with the beast, works "signs" or miracles in order to deceive those who have the mark of the beast and those worshiping the image (19:20). When Satan is thrown into the "bottomless pit" it is for the purpose of preventing him from deceiving the nations any longer (20:3). At the end of the millennium Satan will be given his last chance to deceive the nations of this world (20:7). Finally, when the devil is destroyed in the lake of fire and brimstone along with the

¹Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, "Blasphemeō," TDNT, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 1:622.

beast and the false prophet, it is noted that his deception is the main reason why his extermination is necessary.

In the Book of Revelation there is a power struggle between the forces of Christ who perform erga and the forces of Satan who perform sēmeia ("miracles"). Nowhere else in Scripture is the struggle so clearly outlined, nowhere is the magnitude so visible, nowhere do we see the final victory of Christ over Satan as we do here. Through the ages there has been a great controversy between the forces of good and evil. The patriarchs, then the judges, then the prophets stood up to the forces of evil. Each in turn lost the battle against evil by succumbing to the great ally of the devil--Death. Christ succumbed to this enemy, but only temporarily. Now in Revelation Death rides out again on a pale horse (Rev 6:8). Hades follows along and both are given authority to kill one-fourth of the earth with sword, famine, and pestilence. Finally, these allies of the devil are cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). This is the last enemy to be abolished (1 Cor 15:26). So death which came into the world because of sin (Rom 5:12) is brought to a literal end.

There is no power that can overcome the sēmeia of the beast and the false prophet except Christ, the King of Kings Himself (Rev 19:16). Victory over Satan must include the allies, Death and Hades, for they hold His

saints in their grasp. For this reason a lucid understanding of the difference between the first and second death is crucial. The first death is temporary for everyone while the second is a judgment upon the wicked.

With the destruction of Satan in the lake of fire (Rev 20:10) comes also the destruction of the two pairs of allies--the beast and the false prophet (20:20) and Death and Hades (20:14). Finally, the total annihilation of God's enemies takes place and the universe is clean once again.

Apathetic Believers

The believers in Laodicea are not loyal to the Lord, neither are they rebellious. They are simply apathetic or "lukewarm" (Rev 3:15).

Oida ("I know") is used in Rev. 3:15 to show that God has intimate knowledge of the church. This indicates that no pious word or action can cover up an evil motive. The Lord can see behind the "works" and note the moral character which produces them. Lenski states:

As the works are always the open and the indisputable evidence, thus they are also in the final judgment (Matt 25:35); they evidence the inward condition which the Lord alone sees and knows directly but which he reveals to us by means of the evidential works."¹

This church is showing disloyalty to God by lukewarm behavior. It is neither "cold or hot." "Cold"

¹Lenski, St. John's Revelation, pp. 153-56

(psuchros) might mean one who is in opposition to God's Word. Zestos means "boiled or cooked,"¹ which would mean a total commitment to God. What we have here, in Laodicea, then, is a condition of lethargy and an attitude of rebelliousness toward God. One might term this condition secret or hidden hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy

If good works demonstrate the outworking of sanctification, then evil works would show lack of the same. The fall from complete sanctification comes in steps from apathy to the most complete disloyalty. Hypocrisy indicates the denial on man's part of a sanctified relationship with Christ. It implies an original decision to accept the grace of Christ, but it denies God's desire to develop in man a longing for the complete obedience of sanctification.

The Ephesian letter begins with the statement, "I know your works." While for Ephesus the Lord shows approval, for the church at Sardis the Lord shows disapproval. Their works indicate that their community is dead. W. M. Ramsay calls Sardis "the city of Death."² E. W. Hengstenberg thinks that to be dead is to "be devoid of faith and love. For these are the principles and the

¹Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon of NT, p. 337.

²W. M. Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1906), p. 354.

manifestations of spiritual life."¹ In Eph 2:1, a comparable passage, Paul states that "you were dead through the trespasses and sins. . . ." John Calvin thinks Paul is here referring to the real and present danger of death.² Spiritual death is the separation of a man from God.

Though vss. 4-5 indicate that the entire church had not fallen into spiritual death, the majority of the church had compromised their faith until they were Christians in name only. Hypocrisy was generally practiced.

In Rev 3:2 the Lord is rousing his church. Grēgorein is to be awake when one is aroused. The Lord is stimulating the church to wakefulness. The present imperative ginou ("you be") requires that it continues in this wakefulness. The command is given because their works have not been found "perfect in the sight of my God" (3:2).

The works themselves were meaningless. The faith and love that should have given impetus to their works has diminished. They have become devoid of meaning. The members in Sardis had deluded themselves and others into

¹E. W. Hengstenberg, The Revelation of St. John, 2 vols., Clark's Foreign Theological Library, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1852), 1:168.

²John Calvin, Galatians and Ephesians, Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1847), p. 219.

accepting their reputation of being alive, but to God they are dead.

Heresies

The Nicolaitans were one of the heretical sects at the churches of Ephesus and Pergamum, and possibly elsewhere. Fiorenza identifies the Nicolaitan sect as a Christian group within the churches of Asia Minor who believed that their esoteric insights into the divine gave them the liberty to become part of their syncretistic pagan society.¹ This is a movement which originated from within the church. It was a heretical sect which undermined the work of the church. Here we find a group that is disloyal and, as a result, committing works such as immorality and idolatry that undermine the standards of the church. Here the evidence is in the open, nothing is hidden.

Absolute Disloyalty

In Rev 9:20,21, those who had not been killed with the plagues repented not of the works of their hands nor gave up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see hear or walk; nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts."

"Works of their hands" has particular reference

¹Elizabeth Fiorenza, "Apocalyptic and Gnosis in the Book of Revelation and Paul," JBL 92 (1973):570.

to the idols they had made. Here we find men who place greater importance on things they have created than on the Creator. As one views the men during the sixth plague, they do not soften their hearts toward God, rather they are impenitent and hard. Disloyalty to God is here represented by the production of actual works of gold, silver, and wood, symbolizing man's love affair with material gain even in the church. If these are negative erga, then positive works would be actions approved by God.

The wicked who receive the seven last plagues demonstrate their complete allegiance to the dragon by blaspheming God. They "did not repent of their deeds" (16:11). In ek tōn ergō ("from their deeds") the preposition has the sense of separation.¹

Babylon, the symbol of complete opposition to God, receives double punishment for her sins (Rev 18:6). The acts of Babylon will be rewarded to her in kind. Apodidomi ("render") has the meaning "pay back a debt" (Matt 5:26; 18:25ff; Luke 7:42; 12:59).² The word means "to repay in the form of reward or punishment";³ and

¹A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1914), p. 598.

²Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon of NT, p. 90.

³Friedrich Büchsel, "Apodidomi," TDNT, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 2:167-69.

furthermore, "the thought of retribution is always enclosed in the NT thought of love, as it is transcended by it. Neither creation nor forgiveness is conceivable without retribution."¹

Her reward is diplōsate ("double"). The verb is used only here in the NT (here 1st aorist imper.). It comes from diploos, double (cf. Mt. 23:15).²

Exod 22:4 states: "He shall make restitution," in Heb. shenayîm yeshallēm ("he shall repay double," Exod 22:7,9; Isa 40:2; Jer 16:18; 17:18; Zech 9:12). "The double recompense was according to Levitical law."³ J. M. Ford points out that Babylon's deeds have been doubly bad; for this reason the punishment must be doubly bad.⁴ Isa 40:2 has the reverse of this idea where Yahweh comforts Israel and informs her that she has suffered double for her sins.

Miracles Versus Works

The words ergon and sēmeion have a synonymous relationship in John, essentially meaning miracles as is

¹Ibid., 2:169.

²Robertson, Word Pictures, 6:438.

³Ibid.

⁴J. M. Ford, Revelation, p. 298.

indicated in chap. 2.¹ In Revelation ergon has the meaning of deeds of faith (2:2,5,19a,19b,26; 3:8; 14:13), evil deeds (2:16,22; 3:1,2,15; 9:20; 16:11; 18:6), deeds as judged by God (2:23; 20:12,13; 22:12), and God's acts (15:3). Of the twenty usages, nineteen are used with the meaning of deeds. In Revelation the word is never used in the sense of miracles. The Gospel uses the word ergon in the sense of "miracle" twenty-two of the thirty-five times it is used.² Both ergazomai and ergon are used a total of 210 times in the NT, but only twice outside John do they have the meaning of "miracle" (Matt 11:2; Luke 24:19).³ Only in the Gospel of John is the connotation

¹Rudolf Schnackenburg considers the terms sēmeion and ergon interchangeable when applied to miracles (Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John, 2 vols. [New York: Crossroads Pub. Co., 1982], p. 518). He makes a differentiation as to the message revealed by the terms; "works" for him "are more markedly 'Messianic', while the 'signs' are completely oriented to Christology . . . " (ibid, p. 520). Since Christology and Messiahship are linguistically analogous Schnackenburg needs further evidence to make his case convincing.

²This is counting both the verb ergazomai and the noun ergon in the Gospel of John.

³Even at Matt 11:2 ergon has a broader meaning than miracle including all the activities of Jesus. Luke 24:19 describes Jesus who was mighty en ergō kai logō (word and action so understood by I. Howard Marshall in The Gospel of Luke, p. 895). The combination of word and action is used often at Acts 7:22. It describes Moses who was powerful in word and action (Rom 15:18; 2 Cor 10:11; Col 3:17; 2 Thess 2:17; 1 John 2:18). Since Moses in Exod 4:10 indicates shyness and withdrawal in speech, it may be applying to his written word. So is the opinion of F. F. Bruce in The Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1951), p. 168. As to Moses' daring in martial skills en ergois cf. the story in Jos. Ant. ii. 10 where he leads the expedition against Ethiopians.

of miracle understood in the majority of usages (4:34; 5:20,36; 7:3; 10:25; 15:24; etc.)

The majority of the ergon passages in John are related to the sēmeia of Jesus (John 5:20,36; 6:29; 7:3,21; 9:3f.; 10:25,32,37f.; 14:10ff.; 15:24; 17:4).¹ John calls the works of Jesus His sēmeia thereby noting his superhuman personality (2:11; 4:54; 6:14; 12:18, etc.). John only selected a few signs (works) which in a special way show that Jesus is the Son of God (20:31). Merrill C. Tenney surprisingly claims that though the word "sign" is used by other writers when referring to miracles, "it is the only word used for miracle in the Gospel." He recognizes the words teras and dunamis but completely ignores ergon.² Barrett defines sēmeia as follows:

. . . a symbolic anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality of which the semeion is nevertheless itself a part. A semeion calls the attention of the people of God to the fulfillment of his purposes, and finally, a semeion draws the attention of the Gentiles to the glory of God.³

The synoptic gospels used the word sēmeion, "sign," in a narrower sense; the adversaries of Jesus simply desire to satisfy their craving for miracles

¹Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "Sēmeion," TDNT 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 7:247.

²Merrill C. Tenney, Interpreting Revelation (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1957), pp. 28-29.

³Barrett, St. John, p. 63.

ostensibly to prove His divinity. Jesus refused to work miracles such as this to benefit Himself (Matt 21:38,39; 16:1f; Mark 8:11,12; Luke 11:16,29; 23:8). Jesus answered that only the sign of Jonah would be given to His generation (Matt 16:4; Luke 11:29f.) Though the synoptics use sēmeion in the sense of an omen or anticipatory sign which foreshadows a coming event (Matt 24:3,30; Mark 13:4; Luke 21:7,11,25), they do not apply the word to the miracles. They use sēmeion when referring to eschatological events. C. K. Barrett sees the synoptists reserving the word sēmeion for the eschatological events which signal the last days, while for John the miracles themselves are the eschatological events.¹

John remarkably omits many of the miracles which the synoptists describe, such as the stilling of the storm by a word of His authority (Mark 4:39-41), Peter walking on the sea (Matt 14:28), and the curing of the demoniacs, which is prominent in Mark (Mark 1:23,34; 3:11; 5:2; 7:25; 9:17).

John mentions only six of the erga of Christ. They are:

1. The turning of water into wine (2:1-11)
2. The healing of the official's son (4:46-54)
3. The healing at the Pool of Bethesda (5:2-9)
4. The feeding of the five thousand (6:4-13)

¹Ibid., p. 64.

5. The healing of the blind man (9:1-7)

6. The resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-44).

The miracles designated 1, 2, 4, and 6 are qualified by John as sēmeia. Since John 9:16 refers back to the healing of the blind man, 5 is also a sēmeion. Number 4 is not called a sēmeion although it can be included as one of the erga which Christ alludes to at 5:36.¹

The common words designating Christ's miracles in the gospels are dunamis ("power") and semeion. Dunamis is used to designate the miracle as a revelation of divine power, while semeion is used to confirm Jesus' divine authority.² Ergon is used for creation in the LXX (Gen 2:3); it is also used in salvation history (Exod 34:10; Ps 66:5; 67:12). By use of the term ergon Jesus associates His miracles with creation and the salvific works of His Father in the past: "My Father is working still, and I am working" (John 5:17). Jesus is so closely united with the Father that it may be said "that the Father Himself may be said to perform Jesus' works (14:10)."³

Sēmeion is a narrower term than ergon, though both terms are used for miracles, sēmeion is not used for the whole ministry of Jesus. Both terms "works" and

¹Bernard, St. John, p. clxxvii.

²"The Nature and Purpose of Miracles," SDABC, 5:208.

³R. E. Brown, John, 1:527.

"signs" share as a background the OT description of God acting on the behalf of man.

The term "work" expresses more the divine perspective on what is accomplished, and so is a fitting description for Jesus Himself to apply to the miracles. The term "sign" expresses the human psychological viewpoint, and is a fitting description for others to apply to the miracles of Jesus.¹

The miracles (sēmeion) in Revelation are not performed by Christ or His disciples. Rather they are performed by the adversary, the beast (13:13,14); the spirits of devils (16:14); and the false prophet (19:20). At Rev 12:1,3; 15:1 it is used in the sense of a sign foreboding future events.

The devils use miracles (sēmeion) to proclaim the authority of Satan. While Christ's miracles brought healing and peace, Satan brings planaō ("deception") (13:14). The devils invite those dwelling on the earth to make an image (eikona) to the beast (13:14) and they urge the whole world to make war (polemon) against the people of God (16:14).

The devils have powerful weapons at their disposal to accomplish their task, which are sēmeion. At Matt 24:24 false Christs and false prophets are predicted to arise and show great signs (sēmeion) and wonders (terata) "so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." Paul speaking of the antichrist states that he will work "with all power and with pretended signs and

¹Ibid., 1:529.

wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish" (2 Thess 2:9, 10). Miracles have been used by Satan throughout history to deceive (Gen 3:1-6; Exod 7:10,11,21,22; 8:7; 1 Sam 28:11-14; Acts 8:9-11; 2 Thess 2:9). The miracles of the devil's allies are extremely effective since "the whole earth followed the beast with wonder" (13:3). Their power is also revealed by the fact that he gathers the leaders (tous basileis; "the kings") of the world "for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (16:14). The miracles are effective because God's people do not work miracles in Revelation. They must combat Satan with erga. Their deeds must match the miracles of the devils. Since miracles are seen and observed, so deeds must be seen and observed.

The miracles of the devil, such as calling fire down from heaven (13:13), is a counterfeit reproduction of the fire Elijah called down from heaven (1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Kgs 1:10). John, writing here, would well remember when he himself had wanted to call fire down from heaven (Luke 9:54).

The aim of the sēmeion of the devil will cause the world to worship the beast (13:15). To see worship being given to Vespasian¹ is a limited view and misses the larger perspective of worship which is desired by the competing forces, Satan and God. It is the intention of

¹J. M. Ford, Revelation, p. 222.

Satan to lead the whole world astray while Jesus came to save the world (Heb 2:15).

Christ predicted at John 14:12 that his disciples would do meizona erga ("greater works") than Himself. The NT credits miracles to the apostles through the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:9). For John, acts essentially reveal the power and character of God. The disciples were to reveal God primarily by their actions in following the hupodeigma ("example") of their Lord (Rev 13:15; 17:20), and as the world would see their love for each other (13:35), the world would be attracted to Christ.¹

William Hendriksen emphasizes that erga at John 14:12 represent the miracles Jesus had been doing in the physical realm, while the greater miracles which His disciples would do would be performed in the spiritual realm.² If Revelation were written earlier than the Gospel then there would be reason to believe that the "greater works" (John 14:12) would emphasize deeds since in Revelation God's people do not work miracles. (See note on section entitled "Authorship of the Gospel and Revelation," p. 15). If John were written before Revelation, then Revelation qualifies the statement to emphasize deeds over miracles. In either case, deeds would be accentuated over miracles. Another evidence in

¹Barrett, St. John, p. 384.

²William Hendriksen, The Gospel According to John, 2 vols., New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 1:273.

support of this conclusion is that the disciples do not perform miracles in the Gospel of John, while the saints do not perform miracles in Revelation.

If John would have desired his readers to be certain that miracles were meant, he could have used the phrase sēmeia kai terata (John 4:48, Acts 4:30; 14:3, etc.). This expression was specifically used for miracles. The disciples would not work greater miracles qualitatively than Christ performed. It would be absurd to consider working greater miracles than the raising of Lazarus (John 11:38-44). But the disciples would affect more people by their deeds, because they would be greater in number and bear witness throughout the world.

That deeds are emphasized in Revelation over miracles is further demonstrated by the fact that the saints are passive in their role throughout the book. They have "little power" (3:8); they go through tribulation (2:9); during the persecution reported in the fifth seal, their slain bodies are under the altar (6:9); and they flee into the wilderness (12:6). Yet, these saints appear as victors numbered as the 144,000 (7:4) as well as "a great multitude which no man could number" (7:9), and they sing the triumph song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (15:3). They have achieved victory over the devil because their deeds have demonstrated the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb (7:14).

Since the saints do not perform miracles in

Revelation, the emphasis in John 14:12 should be on deeds.¹ As the prevalence of the gift of tongues ceased at the end of first century because the need for it ceased,² could it be that the prevalence of miracles also ceased because they would be in direct competition with Satan, who will use them in his final deception?

The erga of the saints are more than "a symbolic anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality," as Barrett defines sēmeion.³ Their works are the very reality of Christ Himself being manifest in the believer. Therefore, they win over the machinations of the devil's allies, thus making the deeds of the saints more powerful than the miracles of the devil. More than that, after their death "their deeds follow them" (14:13). This can be interpreted in two ways: (1) "These works follow them in the sense that there can be no separation between what

¹This statement is based on the assumption that the author is the same for both John and Revelation. Similar themes in both books strengthen this assumption. More than that, John 14:12 is an apocalyptic statement, while Revelation describes the time alluded to in this text. Therefore, miracles are in the same context in both books.

²Augustine states that speaking in tongues which they had not learned was given to them by the Holy Spirit. It was a sign from God that they were "adapted to the times . . . to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away." Augustine Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John. Homily VI, Sec. 10. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.

³Barrett, St. John, p. 63.

a man is and what he does."¹ In this case it would refer to the deeds of the saints continuing in heaven within the same ethical mold which they adopted here on earth. (2) It could refer to the influence their lives will have upon others following their death.

The destiny of the antidiivine (the dragon, beast, and false prophet, 16:13) is to be cast into the lake of fire (19:20), and those whom they have misled are slain and finally eaten by birds who gorge themselves with their flesh (vs. 21). While the deeds of the saints have a positive and productive aftermath, the miracles of the devils come to an abrupt and final end.

Covenant in John and Revelation

William H. Shea has shown that the covenant formula is present in the letters to the seven churches in Rev 2-3.² Kenneth A. Strand has amplified on this, noting broader applications of the covenant in the book.³ The word "covenant" appears once at the heart of the book (11:19). It is the symbol of the faithful and intimate fellowship between God and His church. In the historical prologues of Revelation, each church is judged by the following statement: "I know your works. . . ."

¹Mounce, Revelation, p. 278.

²William H. Shea, "The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches," AUSS 21 (1983):71-84.

³Kenneth A. Strand, "A Further Note on the Covenantal Form in the Book of Revelation," AUSS 21 (1963):251-64.

Shea points out that this knowledge implies a relationship between Christ and each church. This relationship has been in progress for a long time, so the deeds of the past can be correctly analyzed. The churches are also given counsel to correct the deficiencies. These are given in imperative statements.¹

Good works in (Revelation 2:5; 2:19; 2:26) are within the covenant relationship--a relationship which finds great emphasis in Revelation. More than that, the outline of Revelation, as demonstrated by J. W. Bowman,² reveals sanctuary imagery. Each major division is referred to as "Acts" emanating from various areas of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is the location of the throne room of God. It is here that the power originates for creation and redemption. The saints in a covenant relationship gain the power to accomplish good works. It is while Jesus is walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks of the sanctuary (1:12) that He examines the erga of the seven churches. It is from the sanctuary that all decisions concerning this earth emanate. It is not the lampstands or the sanctuary which are important; rather it is the setting for the omnipotent ruler who is

¹Shea, "Letters to the Seven Churches," p. 74.

²J. W. Bowman, "Book of Revelation," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. George Arthur Butterick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 64-65.

like unto the Son of Man (1:13).¹ It is from the sanctuary that victory comes over sin, thereby providing power to accomplish good works.

It is this covenant relationship which provides the force and the will for members of the church to do their works. It is a united work in which both God and man have a part to play. Since there is strong covenantal structure in the letters to the churches, this adds authority to the command by Christ to do the works. Here the requirements of God culminate and crescendo. The covenantal theme has threaded its way through the Bible, beginning in preliminary form with Adam at the Fall (Gen 3:15). Later it occurs in connection with Noah (Gen 9:12,15,16). Its promises were subsequently made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 15:18; 17:1-7; etc.). It was formally ratified at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:5-8; 24:3-8). And now, in Revelation, the covenant is ratified for the last time with the remnant. All that has been promised in the past is coming to its full fruition, with strength and finality. Since a trustworthy God stands behind the covenant, He can be relied upon to keep the agreements. As Strand states, "the ancient formulary thus highlights both the overlord's prior goodness (in the 'historical

¹Here in Revelation huion anthrōpou does not have the two articles which are common in the Gospels ho huios tou anthrōpou (Matt 9:6; 12:8; 12:40; Luke 6:5; John 12:34, etc.). John bases this then on Dan 7:13 where huion anthrōpou is coming with the clouds of glory to receive back his kingdom.

prologue') and the continuing care (in conjunction with the 'stipulations')." ¹

In Revelation, the covenantal motif can be seen as one of the predominant themes throughout the book. As the covenant is "the core of the Hebrew understanding of their relationship with God," ² so it is also the core in understanding sanctification in Revelation. The covenantal motif comes to the fore in the historical section. At Rev 4:2 a throne is set in heaven and One sat on the throne (4:3b,5a). The throne is surrounded by a rainbow, which gives the scene a covenant setting, since the rainbow reminds one of the Noahic Covenant. The "flashes of lightning and voices and peals of thunder" recall the covenant made at Sinai. The One seated on the throne (4:11) is praised worthy to receive glory, honor, and power because He is the Creator and Redeemer (5:9). These two offices give Him the authority to be the Suzerain of the covenant. ³ The One on the throne holds in His right hand the title deed to man's lost inheritance indicating His authority and power (5:1). The One who is

¹K. A. Strand, "A Further Note," p. 257.

²William Dyrness, Themes in Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 113.

³An excellent study of the suzerain-servant relationship as portrayed by the Hittite treaties is developed by Meredith G. Kline in Treaty of the Great King (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1963). He relates this especially to the covenant ratification in Deuteronomy.

worthy to open the scroll is both the Lion of the tribe of Judah (the Abrahamic Covenant¹ where the scepter is mentioned, Gen 49:8-10) and the root of David (the Davidic Covenant, the promised Son of David). Both covenants are linked together (Rev 5:5). This suffering servant, by His blood, brought the Abrahamic Covenant to universal proportions for it was made available to "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (5:9).

The Davidic Covenant is emphasized at Rev 5:9, for the Lamb is worthy "to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (5:12). The Lamb receives the very attributes of a king as well as the attributes of divinity since He lives forever and ever (5:14). As with the covenant, which when repeated, became larger and more comprehensive,² so the attributes of Christ are magnified as chap. 5 develops. The Lamb has been obedient to the divine plan, making this victorious reception by the saints possible. The sequence here is historical; it starts, in chap. 4, with the worship of God as Creator (4:11), and then moves to acclaim Him and the Lamb in Redemption (5:9-10; 7:9-12). The community of the redeemed are themselves infused with the character of their Redeemer God whom they worship voluntarily in a

¹See discussion of the divine promises made through the Abrahamic Covenant. Gerhard F. Hasel, Covenant in Blood (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1982), pp. 42-51.

²Dryness, Themes of OT Theology, p. 120.

diligent manner (chaps. 7, 14, 15), and they experience the full benefits of the Covenant.

At 12:10,11, the community of the Redeemed, bound together by the covenant,¹ have won the victory over Satan through the blood of the Lamb. The saints work out a consistent obedient life according to the terms of the covenant by imitating the character of the Lamb. At 12:17 the people for whom the covenant is a way of life are a commandment-keeping people. This is a corollary of the covenant which "expresses the love of God and indicates the means by which a man must live to reflect love for God."² The saints have the testimony of Jesus so that they can pass on the very counsel of God to a spiritually depraved world. This spiritual gift (19:10) given to the remnant church is illustrative of the task of the covenantal people to teach, to instruct, to admonish those about them with God's covenantal principles. Those who stand outside the covenantal relationship are the dragon, the beast, and the whore with whom the saints must deal.

As the book culminates, we find covenant language at 21:3: "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He

¹George E. Mendenhall, in his land mark study Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East, (Pittsburg: Biblical Colloquium, 1955), p. 5, points out that the covenant of Sinai was the formal means which united the semi-nomadic clans into a united religious and political community. The same can be said of the saints of the close of history who will also be united by the covenant.

²Peter C. Craigie, The Book of Deutoronomy (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1976), p. 37.

will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them." There is an intimate presence emphasized, since they need no light because God Himself will be there (vs. 23). An obvious covenant blessing and cursing formula appears at 21:7,8: "He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Sonship in the context of the Davidic covenant¹ is necessary for the Royal Grant to be legal, for it must be legitimized by an adoption formula. On the day of the coronation the new king was "adopted" and pronounced "my Son."²

¹While the Egyptian Pharoahs ruled as gods, and the Babylonian kings ruled with absolute autocracy, the king of Israel derives his kingly office from god and it is rooted in the covenant relationship with Him. This kingly covenant derives from the Sinai covenant. Jacob Jocz, The Covenant (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968), pp. 63, 64.

²I am indebted to Lee J. Gugliotto for some of the covenantal analogies taken from one of his unpublished papers and used in this section.

CONCLUSION

In Revelation, ergon is used to describe the works of faith (2:2; 2:5; 2:26; 3:8), evil deeds (2:6; 2:22; 3:1,2; 3:15; 9:20; 16:11; 18:6), God's acts (15:3), and God's judgment (20:12,13; 22:12). Ergon is not used to mean a miracle in Revelation. On the other hand sēmeion is used in Revelation with the meaning of miracle or wonder (12:1,3; 13:13,14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20).

The word ergon is used in a different manner in the historical series (1:12-14:20) than in the eschatological series (15:1-21:4).¹ In the historical series, God is either commending a church for its good deeds or works of faith (2:2,5,19,26), or reproving the church for its evil deeds (2:6,22; 3:1,2; 3:15). In the historical series, works are still in a reversible state. The church can alter its relationship with God and alter the tendency of its behavior.

In the eschatological series, God is, however, seen judging the deeds of the righteous and the wicked, who can no longer alter their behavior. At 22:11,12 it definitely states that after the Second Coming of Christ each individual case will have been decided, neither the

¹These designations have been given by Kenneth Strand in a booklet entitled Interpreting the Book of Revelation.

righteous nor the wicked will alter their characters after this event. Here ergon is used in the singular and it suggests that the word is used to collectively describe the whole life of a person. Since it is taken that this verse applies to the end of time, there is no time to alter the character or practice of man.¹ More than that, a time is coming when a change will be out of the question.²

Works in Revelation, the good works, are not rigorous requirements which must be unwillingly fulfilled, rather they are diakonia ("service," Rev 2:19), a term which indicates that they are performed voluntarily. Love and faith (Rev 2:19) are the foundational works upon which the others are built. Patience, loyalty, service, and keeping the commandments are some of the works of the saints which develop from the foundation.

In Revelation, the struggle between the forces of Christ and the forces of Satan are more clearly presented than anywhere in Scripture. Evil deeds predominate in Revelation; erga are used eight times in an evil context and only twice in a good context. This goes contrary to the emphasis in the NT where erga are found fifty-one times in a good context while they are mentioned only twenty-nine times in an evil context. The evil in Revelation can be found in degrees from apathy, as we find

¹Mounce, Revelation, p. 392.

²Ladd, Revelation of John, p. 292.

in the lukewarm condition of the Laodiceans (Rev 3:16), to the hypocrisy which is practised in Sardis, to the heresies found in Pergamum and Thyatira, and finally to the absolute disloyalty and rebellion of those who worship demons (Rev 9:20). The wicked who receive the seven last plagues demonstrate their complete defiance against God by blaspheming Him.

Though ergon is used twenty times in Revelation, only four times is it used in connection with God. As far as the word ergon is concerned the greater emphasis is upon man's part in sanctification. God's part is described in the deliverance from the Egyptians, and in a more general sense, from sin. God judges mankind and the basis of this judgment is their erga. God judges on the basis of motives, as well as the outward acts. Everyone stands before the judgment throne; therefore, the "great and small" (Rev 20:12) are mentioned. They are judged by the works which they have done during their lifetime (Matt 16:27; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 2:23; 22:12).

All "works" in the life of man are not sin contrary to what Bertram in his article entitled "Ergon" attempts to demonstrate. The word group itself is neutral in moral reference. It is the context, either good or evil, which determines whether the word has a good or evil connotation. God, on the other hand, is never referred to as doing evil works.

The LXX word group of ergon translates several

Hebrew words denoting action, work, or achievement. Since God's erga, such as creation and deliverance, are exterior works, this gives more force to the argument that works are basically exterior action. The Johannine literature reflects this usage, especially in Revelation, which is filled with allusions and quotations from the OT.

Behavior which is listed in Revelation, such as hypocrisy in Sardis and apathy in Laodicea and the heresies of the Nicolaitans, points to exterior behavior. This evidence counteracts Charles's position, which considers works synonymous with character. Though exterior behavior issues from an inward source called character, works are essentially an external human behavior taking place through man's creative will in response to his covenant relationship with Christ. This process is called sanctification.

Works are always and only possible within the covenant relationship with God. It is the covenantal relationship which provides the force and the will for the saints to accomplish their works. It is a united work in which both God and man have a part to act. The process of sanctification requires an energizing force which only the covenant relationship supplies.

Love is considered the first work (Rev 2:4,5) in Revelation. All the other works are motivated by the first ergon, which is love. Love, as Quell emphasizes, is the whole foundation of the covenant. It is the covenant

relationship which gives the energizing force to the works. Love is based on the love of Christ. Love has purpose, and its force is seen in outward action. Works in Ephesus are the fruits of love. Not only are erga separate acts or deeds, they can also be a total life-style as is emphasized by kopos and hypomone ("toil" and "patience"--Rev 2:2), words which emphasize the active and passive aspects of this life-style.

In Revelation, the saints work out a consistent obedient life according to the terms of the covenant, they do this by imitating the character of the Lamb, who has won the victory over Satan through His blood. Here the covenant requirements--the erga--culminate; here, for the last time, the covenant is ratified with the remnant so that eternal life can be theirs.

The words ergon and sēmeion have a synonymous relationship in the Gospel of John, essentially meaning "miracle." In fact, ergon is used with this meaning twenty-two of the thirty-five references in the Gospel. In Revelation, however, in nineteen of the twenty occurrences, ergon is used with the meaning of good or evil deeds; it is never used in the sense of miracle. The allies of the devil, on the other hand, work miracles (sēmeion) to proclaim the authority of Satan over God. Miracles (sēmeion) have always authenticated the work of prophets such as Moses as representatives of God (see chap. 1).

Miracles (erga) authenticated the ministry of Jesus proclaiming that He was divine (see chap. 2). The allies of the devil work miracles which authenticate that they represent Satan, while the saints are bereft of this sign of authorization.¹ Instead they have erga ("deeds") which are performed rather than the miracles which we find in the Gospel of John. The same word, however, is used in both books. In other words, the erga ("miracles") which authenticated the ministry of Jesus now can no longer give authority to the saints, since the devil is using miracles. Therefore, the saints' erga here are deeds performed to authenticate their ministry as originating from God. For this reason the "greater works" which Jesus predicted that the disciples would perform (John 14:12) are probably "deeds" and not "miracles."

One final consideration concerning "deeds" and "miracles" emerges from the Book of Revelation. In the end, the devil and his cohorts, in spite of their miracles, are to be cast into the lake of fire (19:20). It is possible then, that the emphasis in Revelation on

¹The miracles of Jesus authenticated His mission, but the greatest event was the major deed of all, His death on the Cross where His glorification took place (John 12:23); His hour had come. In Revelation Satan works with paramount effort in his two characteristic modes of operation--deception (John 8:44) and persecution (Rev 13:5-18). He and his cohorts work miracles for the purpose of deception, an activity foretold in the "synoptic apocalypse" (Matt 24:21-24). The relationship of the saints to Christ is not authenticated by counter miracles against Satan and his cohorts. Rather it is revealed by kinship to Christ in the manifestation of faithfulness--even the faithfulness unto death (Rev 12:11).

"deeds" rather than "miracles" on the part of the saints indicates that since the devil's allies perform miracles, the saints will be victorious over these forces of evil only by the more powerful force that their deeds or "works" will exert, through and because of their constant relationship with Christ.

PART TWO

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

CHAPTER IV

SYLLABUS: "WORKS" AS USED IN REVELATION

The following five syllabi deal with the topic of "works" in Revelation. Today, among some members in the church, there is a division of opinion between the emphasis placed on justification by faith versus sanctification. Those who emphasize justification assume works to be a natural outgrowth of faith in Christ. Though this is true, there appears to be a de-emphasis on Christian standards. Many members look with disdain upon the obligations of church membership. They have heard them reiterated all their lives and have decided to abandon many of them.

Among such members the following results can be observed: (1) the disregard of the sacredness of the Sabbath; (2) the abandonment of health principles; (3) the neglect of tithing; (4) the belittlement of the counsels found in the writings of Ellen G. White;¹ (5) the laxness in church attendance; and finally (6) the departure from the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the renunciation of its beliefs.

Another segment of the church is severely

¹Traditionally regarded among Seventh-day Adventists as "the Spirit of Prophecy."

rigorous in interpreting the standards of the church. It emphasizes the strict keeping of the commandments, while placing little emphasis on justification by faith. The overemphasis placed on requirements relegates the death of Christ and His power to lip service. This attitude leads to legalism.

Legalism leads the church member to trust in himself and to make his acceptance with God dependent on his performance. There is an overconfidence in the member's own ability to do God's will. A pharisaical attitude develops in which the member considers his own exemplary behavior superior to others in the church. This can lead to separation and exclusivism. A harsh attitude toward others may result, especially if others in the church are weak in fulfilling the demands placed upon them by the legalists. Church discipline may also be pitiless and unforgiving. In the end the legalist finds that he is unable to live up to the standards erected for himself. Without Christ no man can live up to the standards established by the Savior.

Both extremes have their weaknesses. The five lectures will attempt to bring a balance between the two views.

Since we are sinners, it is difficult for us to gain a state of equilibrium. Therefore, we need the assistance of Christ and God's Scriptural principles. It is the intention that five seminars presented here can,

hopefully, lead to a more balanced understanding of justification and sanctification.

Many members feel they cannot do the "works" required of them. They would like to live a Christian life, but feel their weaknesses overwhelm them. They simply do not have the willpower to live a Christian lifestyle. It is not that they do not want to fulfill God's requirements for themselves, it is simply that they are unable to accomplish them, and God seems so distant that He seems impotent to help them. These syllabi address this problem.

From this study it seems clear that while Christ is central to salvation, works are central to the life of one who seeks salvation.

The first syllabus synthesizes the understanding of ergon ("work") as developed in part one of this dissertation/project. It is designed to be presented for members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

First Study

Works as the Fruit of a Covenant Relationship

Introduction

1. Is the covenant still relevant or is it an OT phenomenon?
2. How does the covenant help us in our everyday living?

I. The Centrality of the Covenant in Revelation

A. The covenant is central to the understanding of the seven churches. The messages to the seven churches are written using a covenantal formula-- a form that is used in the entire book of Revelation. This formula is commonly used at that time in manuscripts dealing with the suzerain-vassal documents in the Middle East.

The formula has the following sections and found in all the churches. An example is that found at Rev 2:18-29 describing the Thyatira church:

1. Preamble (vs. 18): "The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze."
2. Prologue (vss. 19-21): "I know your works, your love, and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess."
3. Curse (vss. 22-23): "I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her doings; . . . I will give to each of you as your works deserve."
4. Stipulations (vss. 24-25): "To the rest of

you in Thyatira . . . hold fast what you have, until I come."

5. Blessing (vss. 26-28): "He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . . and I will give him the morning star."
6. Witness (vs. 29): "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

B. The covenant is central to the whole book of Revelation.

1. Preamble (1:5a): " . . . and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth."
2. Historical Prologue (1:5b-6a): "To him who loves us, and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father."
3. Stipulations: In addition to the imperatives of the seven letters, the book of Revelation is replete with calls to loyalty and faithfulness--against deception, against persecution, etc. (note, e.g., Rev 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 12:11,17; 14:12-13; 16:15; 18:4; 20:4). Intermingled with such "stipulations"

are declarations of the suzerain Lord's own loyalty and faithfulness to his followers (note, e.g., Rev 5:9-10; 7:15-17; 11:18; 14:1-4; 16:4-7; 18:20; chaps. 19-22; and also the promises and assurances in the seven letters of chaps. 2, 3).

4. Witnesses (22:16a): "I Jesus have sent my angel with this testimony for the churches . . . He who testifies to these things (22:20a)."

5. Blessing-and-Curse Formulation (22:7b):
 "Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book . . . Blessed are those who wash their robes" (KJV and New KJV, "do his commandments"; 22:14a).

C. A fundamental aspect of the ancient covenant formulary, whether in the Biblical literature or in the Hittite suzerainty treaty, was to show the suzerains' prior goodness and unmerited favor toward the vassal. This can be noted in Exod 20:2 in the historical prologue "who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

1. The covenant relationship is emphasized in the prologue by the statement "I know your works . . . " Rev 2:5; this relationship has been in progress for a long time between

Christ and the believer, so one is able to evaluate the works of the other. In this case the expression refers to the previous relationship between the suzerain Jesus and His vassal, the church.

2. This relationship which Jesus established with His church is also applied to His people as individuals.

3. The Israelites had not done great deeds that released them from Egypt, but it was God's goodness which drew them out of Egypt. In the same way it is not our goodness which places us in a covenant relationship with Christ, but it is God's goodness which brings us out of our personal Egypt of sin.

D. It is the covenant relationship with Christ that provides the force and the willpower for members of the church to do His works.

III. The Whole Bible Has Strong Covenantal Emphasis

A. Adam at the Fall (Gen 3:15)

B. Noah after the Flood (Gen 9:12,15,16)

C. Abraham when called from Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 12:1-3)

D. Ratified with the blood of bullocks at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:5-8; 24:3-8)

E. Ratified with the blood of Christ at Calvary (Heb 12:24)

IV. Final Confirmation of the Covenant in Revelation

- A. In Revelation the covenant culminates all the promises and stipulations of the Bible. "In the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end."¹
- B. The covenant motif in Revelation encompasses the covenant motif outlined in the Scriptures.
 1. Rev 5:3--No man from Adam on could open the book. Christ was able to open the book because he was the rightful suzerain of the covenant (Gen 3:15).
 2. Rev 4:3--Rainbow around throne--Noahic covenant (Gen 9:12, 15, 16).
 3. Rev 5:5-- Christ is able to open the scroll-- it is done by the Lion of the tribe of Judah--Abrahamic covenant. This fulfills the promise given to Abraham in Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14.
 4. Rev 4:5--Lighting/thunder--Sinaitic Covenant (Exod 19:16-19).
 5. Rev 5:6--Lamb as it were slain. This symbolizes Christ's death on the cross; the final ratification of the covenant (Heb 9:11-28).

V. Works as They Relate to the Covenant

- A. The community of the redeemed are infused with

¹Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 585.

the character of their Redeemer God whom they worship voluntarily. The saints work out a consistent obedient life according to the terms of the covenant by imitating the character of the Lamb. At 12:17 the people for whom the covenant is a way of life are a commandment-keeping people.

B. The book culminates with covenant language--Rev 21:3. "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them."

E. The covenant relationship provides the power for His people to keep the commandments.

Conclusion

The covenant is still relevant to us today since the new covenant is the believers' relationship with Christ. Just as the covenant is central to the book of Revelation, so the covenant relationship with Christ is central to the accomplishment of good works in our lives.

If we willingly submit to a relationship with Christ we will more and more take on His character. It is this relationship which provides the power to perform good works. Let us choose today to be within the safety of that relationship.

Second Study

Good Works

Introduction

1. Can man do good works?
2. What makes a work good rather than evil?
3. What is the motivation for a good work?

I. Love Considered a Good Work

- A. Thyatira has experienced a growth of love and faith because "your latter works exceed the first" (Rev 2:19).
- B. Ephesus--love is the first work which must be done (Rev 2:4)--love for Christ, love for one another, love for the world.
- C. The Ephesian church is asked to remember the heights from which it has fallen (Rev 2:5). This refers back to the first love the church had for the Lord whom it had forgotten. "Remember" in the Greek means a continuous state of remembering from where it had fallen. "Remember" applies to the first love which are deeds, for one does not remember character or inward desire but the love which was shown in deeds.
- D. In order for the Ephesians to do the first works they must repent, which is a decisive turning about. First their hearts were to be rededicated. The doctrinal controversies had probably created animosities. These had to be

corrected. Fruit, when applied to the life of man, indicates the life-style expressed in deeds, whether good or evil (Ps 1:3; Jer 17:8; Acts 26:29). The acts of men, represented by fruits, are signs by which their inner nature can be revealed (Matt 7:16f).

E. Love and faith are also "works" (2:19; Jas 2:18-22). The "and" is an epexegetical kai which means that the word before "and" equals that which follows it. Therefore, they are exterior expressions of character because the basic sense of the word "works" requires this. Love and faith are also motives for works as expressed above.

F. Ignatius, an early church father, indicated that the church obeyed at the call of Jesus in Revelation. He states that they "Peacefully accomplished the work which was befitting to you." It appears that they repented of their evil deeds.

II. Works in Revelation Demonstrate Spiritual Strength and Growth

A. Intimate knowledge by Christ of church members

1. "I know your works" (Rev 2:2) reveals that Christ is well acquainted with the church.

2. Since Christ thoroughly knows our condition,

He is eminently qualified to judge us.

3. Works are not necessarily separate acts, but the life-style of the Christian. This can be demonstrated by "toil and patience," which give the active and passive aspects of the kind of living that constitutes a holy life.
4. The good works of the Ephesians can be noted in their opposition to and their rejection of false teachers of Ephesus.
 - a. They cannot bear evil men.
 - b. They hate the works of the Nicolaitans.

The Nicolaitans appear to have taught that deeds of the flesh do not affect the purity of the soul.
 - c. The false teachers were judged by their words. This clearly required judgment of outward actions by which the inward character of the Nicolaitans became known.
5. Works are willingly performed.
 - a. They are not rigorous requirements which the church members loath to do.
 - b. They are service which the truly dedicated person performs voluntarily and willingly (Rev 2:19).

c. There are many examples of service in the NT:

(i) Angels come and minister to Jesus in the wilderness;

(ii) Jesus "came not to be served but to serve . . ." (Matt 20:28);

(iii) " . . . let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:26);

(iv) Slaves do the bidding of the master, but service we give our brothers. For this reason Paul could write to Philemon regarding Onesimus, asking Philemon to take him back "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother . . ." (Phlm 16).

6. Works indicate growth or a backslidden condition.

a. Thyatira is a church where we note progress in its spiritual growth. It is stated "your latter works exceed the first" (Rev 2:19)

b. Ephesus is a church which has backslidden; it is advised to "do the works you did at first" (Rev 2:5).

III. Works Demonstrate Loyalty to God

A. Loyalty is expressed by various attributes within the churches.

1. Ephesus has patient endurance (Rev 2:1).
2. Pergamum holds fast the name of Christ (Rev 2:13).
3. Philadelphia is loyal by not denying Christ's name (Rev 3:8).
4. Thyatira is admonished to "hold fast what you have, until I come" (Rev 2:25).

B. Loyalty is demonstrated by witnessing.

1. The Philadelphia church has set before it "an open door, which no one is able to shut . . ." (Rev 3:8).
2. The "door" may represent "unlimited opportunity for personal victory in the struggle with sin, and for bearing witness to the saving truth of the gospel."
3. Works open up unlimited doors of opportunity of which the unconverted person never dreams. "Door" is used several times in this manner (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3).
4. In the Philadelphia church Christ is portrayed as "the true one." He is dependable. If, as many commentators believe, the open door is an opportunity for missionary effort,

the saints would have much about which to witness, since they can depend upon "the True One."

5. The Philadelphia church, in spite of its lack of power, kept Christ's word and, therefore, it will have the opportunity of giving to others the good news of the gospel.

Conclusion

Good works are done within a covenant relationship with Christ and emanate from the motives of faith and love. Faith and love, however, are not only motives. They are also works, in the sense that they can be seen as exterior expressions of character.

Good works are not demonstrated by being good one day and not another, and they are not to be done selectively. There is a need for good works to become a life-style. This means we must get to the root of evil and repent of it, so that we continually reflect the love of Christ.

Many of Christ's attributes as enumerated in Rev 2 and 3 should be emulated, from loyalty to patient endurance, to boldly proclaiming the truths of the Scriptures.

Good works result from a volitional choice within the relationship with Christ. This demands a deliberate choice via the use of willpower. If this were not so, Christ would not have said, "I know your works." He would

have said: "I know your motives," or "I know your spirit," or "I know your relationship with me." But He said, "I know your works."

We need to pray every day that we do our Father's will. He will be very generous in forgiving us when we falter and very desirous to see us walking His way.

Third Study

Evil Works

Introduction

1. What is the source for evil works?
2. What makes a work evil?
3. What kind of evil will be prominent in the last days?
4. Who were the Nicolaitans and what can we learn from them today?

I. The Source of Evil Works

- A. The root of evil resides in the devil.
- B. The characteristics of Christ are in direct contrast with those of the devil.
 1. Christ speaks the truth, does the truth, and is the truth (John 1:14,17; 3:21; 5:33; 8:40,45,46; 14:6; 16:7; 18:37).
 2. The devil, on the other hand, is a liar from the beginning (John 8:44). This is a fundamental characteristic of the devil.
- C. Satan leads the forces of one-third of heaven

(Rev 12:4) against Michael and his angels. Satan is portrayed as having fully developed his deception and is called the "deceiver of the whole world" (Rev 12:9). Deception is the common ingredient which unites him with his followers.

1. The beast reviles God because he desires to have the power of God and God's domain.
2. Blasphemy has the basic thought of violation of the power and majesty of God.
3. Babylon, the city which symbolically represents the territory and characteristics of the beast, deceives by sorcery (18:23). Sorcery has the basic meaning of "mixer of poisons." This illustrates well the completely corrupt character of Babylon which "has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit . . . " (18:5).
4. When Satan is thrown into the "bottomless pit," it is for the purpose of preventing him from deceiving the nations any longer (20:3). At the end of the millenium Satan will be given his last chance to deceive the nations of this world (20:7).
5. Finally, when the devil is destroyed in the lake of fire, it is his deception which is the main reason for his extermination.

D. The Great Ally of the Devil--Death

1. Through the ages there has been a great controversy between the forces of good and evil. Through the ages God's followers have stood against this evil. Each in turn has lost the battle against evil by succumbing to the great ally of the devil--Death. Christ succumbed to this enemy, but only temporarily.
2. Now in Revelation Death rides out again on a pale horse (Rev 6:8). Hades follows along and both are given authority to kill one-fourth of the earth with sword, famine, and pestilence. Finally these allies of the devil are cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). This is the last enemy to be abolished (1 Cor 15:26). So death came into the world because of sin (Rom 5:12), and it is brought to a literal end.

E. Destruction of the Two Pairs of Allies

1. With the destruction of Satan in the lake of fire (Rev 20:10) comes also the destruction of the two pairs of allies--the beast and the false prophet (20:20) and Death and Hades (20:14). Finally the total annihilation of God's enemies takes place and the universe is clean once again.

II. Various Degrees of Evil Are Expressed by Certain Believers

A. Apathetic Believers

1. The believers in Laodicea are not loyal to the Lord, neither are they rebellious. They are simply apathetic or "lukewarm" (Rev 3:15).
2. "I know" is used in Rev 3:15 to show that God has intimate knowledge of the church. This indicates that no pious word or action can cover up an evil motive. The Lord can see behind the "works" and He notes the moral character which produces them.
3. This church is showing disloyalty to God by lukewarm behavior. "Cold" might mean one who is in opposition to God's Word. "Hot" would mean a total commitment to God. This state of lethargy might be termed as secret or hidden hypocrisy.

B. Hypocrisy

1. Sardis has the name of being alive, but is actually dead.
2. Though vss. 4-5 indicate that the entire church had not fallen into spiritual death, the majority in the church had compromised their faith until they are Christians in name

only. Hypocrisy was generally practiced.

3. The Lord is rousing His church to be awake (Rev 3:2). "Awake" is a present imperative which requires that the church must continue to be wakeful. The command is given because the works of the members of Sardis have not been found "perfect in the sight of my God" (3:2).
4. The works themselves were meaningless. The faith and love that should have given impetus to their works has diminished. The members in Sardis had deluded themselves and others into accepting their reputation of being alive, but to God they are dead.

C. Heresies

1. The Nicolaitans were one of the heretical sects at the churches of Ephesus and Pergamum, and possibly elsewhere.
2. The Nicolaitans had a form of antinomianism. They taught that the deeds of the flesh had no effect upon the health of the soul, and, consequently, the deeds would have no relation to salvation.
3. The works of the Nicolaitans undermined the harmonious operation of the church. They were disloyal and therefore performed such works as immorality and idolatry that

undermined the standards of the church. This was not hidden hypocrisy, but open violation of God's commands.

D. Absolute Disloyalty

1. The wicked during the time of the plagues repented not of the works of their hands nor gave up worshiping demons and "idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, . . . nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts" (Rev 9:20, 21).
2. "Works of their hands" has particular reference to the idols they had made. Here are men who place greater importance on things they have created than on the Creator. These men whom we find during the sixth plague do not soften their hearts toward God, rather they are impenitent and hard.
3. The wicked who receive the seven last plagues demonstrate their complete allegiance to the dragon by blaspheming God. It is stated they "did not repent of their deeds" (16:11).
4. Babylon, the symbol of complete opposition to God, receives double punishment for her sins (Rev 18:6). The acts of Babylon will be rewarded to her in kind. "Render to her as

she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds" ("works") (Rev 18:6).

5. "Render" has the meaning of pay back a debt (Matt 5:26; 18:25ff; Luke 7:42; 12:59). The word means "to repay in the form of reward or punishment." " . . . The thought of retribution is always enclosed in the NT thought of love, as it is transcended by it. Neither creation nor forgiveness is conceivable without retribution."¹
6. Levitical law required a double recompense. Babylon's deeds have been doubly bad; for this reason the punishment must be doubly bad. The reverse of this idea is found in Isa 40:2 where Yahweh comforts Israel and informs her that she has suffered double for her sins.

Conclusion

Satan is the source of evil works. If we stray even slightly on his ground he can snare us and misguide us until we are completely under his control. Therefore, even a deed that appears harmless must sometimes be denied. We must, as mature Christians, be able to discern between faith and presumption.

Any "work" is evil if it takes place outside of

¹Büchsel, "Apodidomi," TDNT, 2:169.

the covenant relationship with Christ. Evil is found in our lives in various gradations. We can be lukewarm and delude ourselves into feeling that we are safe in Christ, yet in the end be totally lost. We can delude ourselves even more by living hypocritically, projecting an appearance of righteousness but lacking any real substance. Falling into heresies is a very subtle form of evil. It is easy to pick out flagrant heresies such as a belief which rejects the sanctity of the Sabbath or the belief in Christ as Savior. It is so much easier to slide into aberrations of justification (cheap grace) or sanctification (legalism) which appear to lead to salvation, but in reality take us away from Christ.

No matter what category of evil we may fall into, they all have a tendency to go toward complete disloyalty to God. Let us be careful to stay away from Satan's ground. One slip may be the beginning of a toboggan slide which will lead to our eternal ruin.

Fourth Study

Judgment According to Works

Introduction

1. What is the final basis upon which men will be judged?
2. Will we be judged according to our motives or our works?

3. Can works be separated from grace and faith?
4. Are works partially or completely our accomplishment?

I. God Decides the Fate of Every Sinner

A. The final basis of the decision is the believer's works.

1. God can make this decision because He knows the motives which produce the works. God states: " . . . I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve" (Rev 2:23). The word "search" has the meaning of thorough investigation.
2. The Thyatira members are aware, on the basis of the OT, that the Lord tries the minds and hearts (Ps 7:9), proves them (Ps 26:2), and tests them as gold (Zech 13:9).
3. Nothing more definitely applies to God than the ability to search the heart. Only God has the capacity to search the heart.
4. The "mind" (Rev 2:23) is a translation of the Greek word nephros which literally means kidney. In the Bible it stands for the inmost mind, the secrets of the soul. Here we note God's knowledge of man's life and

sins. It may be a sin of the thought process or an outward deed.

B. The Biblical basis of the decision for judgment is works.

1. Jeremiah expresses the principles of divine judgment clearly when he states: "I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer 17:10). This principle is restated by Jesus ("the Son of man . . . will repay every man for what he has done," Matt 16:27) and by Paul ("He will render to every man according to his works," Rom 2:6).
2. Though judgment by God (Rev 2:23) makes determination of motives, He makes the final decision on the basis of outward deeds because the basic meaning of "works" requires this. It is not until a person acts on his thoughts that character traits are developed. Here we see God's part in judgment which is a decision of the validity of a person's Christian experience.
3. The judgment, as described in Rev 20:12,13, is clearly based on the works of men: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened.

Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done."

These verses are parallel to Rom 2:6, "For he will render to every man according to his works." The Scriptures are clear that men are to be judged by what they have done.

4. We are saved by grace, but judged according to our works. Just as the fruit of a tree indicates the type of tree so our works indicate what type of Christian we are. The book of life forms a register of those who will receive eternal life.
5. Everyone from Adam on stands before the judgment throne; therefore, the "great and small" are mentioned (20:10). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10).
6. Though the book of life contains the deeds of the righteous, the other books contain the deeds of the wicked. How can they be judged

from the books unless the deeds are written therein?

7. The following passages teach judgment according to works (Jer 17:10; Matt 16:27; 2 Cor 5:16; Rev 2:23; and Rev 22:12). These texts reveal that a man will be compensated or condemned by the actual life he has lived and his true character. This teaching in Rom 2:6 does not contradict Rom 3:28 where it is stated "that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law." Paul is not contrasting works and the law, but rather what a man really is and what he might profess to be.
8. Works in the final judgment are the evidence of faith. Faith is proven in its reality and sincerity only by such evidence (Jas 2:18). This is the evidence which God will use to render His judgment.
9. Works are not partially or completely our accomplishment. Rather they are possible only by the all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ as our Savior. It is because of His dual offices of Savior and Lord that He judges us by our works.
10. Ivan Blazen has stated it succinctly:
"Christ judged sin at the cross, justifies

the sinner by faith, and judges the justified by works." Works should not be separated from faith and grace.

11. The weighing of good works against evil works as the sole criterion for determining the reception of eternal life comes to us from the religion practiced in Egypt. On the other hand, there is a unity in the biblical concepts of grace, faith, and works.

C. Salvation comes from God.

1. It is God who works salvation in us. It is for this reason that the "great multitude" of the redeemed (Rev 7:9) stand before the Lamb by crying out: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb" (7:10). Salvation here is a completed act and the credit for final salvation goes to God and the Lamb. It is when the saints are filled with gratitude for the salvation that was made possible by Christ that obedience to accomplish His will comes voluntarily and cheerfully.

Conclusion

We all will be found at the judgment and the Judge will be Christ. It is He who will decide our final destiny by our works. We are saved by grace, but judged according to our works. Works are not partially or

completely our accomplishment, they result from Christ working in us. Our works reveal our motives and are the evidence of our faith.

It is not until we take a stand for Christ that we are really permanently on His side. We may hold a belief for a long time, but it is not until we practice that belief that it becomes firm and sure in our lives.

God has the ability to search the heart; therefore, His judgment is fair and impartial. We must be careful to keep our hearts in tune with His so our motives will find expression in good deeds.

Since our works in the final judgment are an evidence of faith, let us strengthen our faith in Christ.

Fifth Study

Miracles Versus Works

Introduction

1. Do the saints or the devils perform miracles in Revelation?
2. Do the works of the saints authenticate their being representativeness of God.
3. How does this relate to the "works" Christ performed while here on earth, according to the Gospel of John?

I. Meaning of "Works" in John and Revelation

The words "works" and "signs" have a similar meaning in John. They mean miracles. In Revelation

"works" is used in the sense of deeds of faith (2:2,5,19a,19b,26; 3:8; 14:13), evil deeds (2:16,22; 3:1,2,15; 9:20; 16:11; 18:6), deeds as judged by God (2:23; 20:12,13; 22:12), and God's acts (15:3). Of the twenty usages, nineteen are used with the meaning of deeds. In Revelation the word is never used in the sense of miracles. The Gospel, on the other hand, uses the word "works" in the sense of "miracle" twenty-two of the thirty-five times. Both ergazomai (the verb, "to work") and ergon (the noun, "work") are used a total of 210 times in the NT, but only twice outside John do they have the meaning of "miracle" (Matt 11:2; Luke 24:19). Only in the Gospel of John is the connotation of miracle understood in the majority of usages.

Let us look at a few examples. In John 5:20 we read: "For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing; and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel." Jesus had just healed a man who had been paralyzed thirty-eight years (5:5); therefore, he was speaking of miracles in this instance which were going to be greater than performed here. He may have been referring to the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43). Another reference made by Jesus is in John 15:24: "If I had not done among them the

works which no one else did, they would not have sin."

II. The Relationship of "Miracles" and "Works" in the Gospel of John

- A. The majority of "works" passages in John are related to the "signs" of Jesus (John 5:20,36; 6:29; 7:3,21; 9:3f.; 10:25,32,37f.; 14:10ff.; 15:24; 7:4). John calls the works of Jesus His "signs," thereby noting his superhuman personality (2:11; 4:54; 6:14; 12:18; etc.).
- B. John selected only a few "signs"--(works) which in a special way show that Jesus is the Son of God (20:31).
- C. Barrett defines "signs" as follows: " . . . a symbolic anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality of which the sēmeion ("signs") is nevertheless itself a part. A sēmeion calls the attention of the people of God to the fulfillment of His purposes, and Gentiles to the glory of God.
- D. In the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) the adversaries of Jesus want him to work "signs" to satisfy their craving for miracles. Those who request it appear on the surface to desire Jesus thereby to prove His divinity. Jesus refused to work miracles such as this to benefit Himself

(Matt 21:28,39; 16:1f.; Mark 8:11, 12; Luke 11:16,29; 23:8).

- E. Jesus answered that only the sign of Jonah would be given to His generation (Matt 16:4; Luke 11:29f.). Though the synoptics use "sign" in the sense of an omen or anticipatory sign which foreshadows a coming event (Matt 24:3,30; Mark 13:4; Luke 21:7,11,25), they do not apply the word to miracles.
- F. C. K. Barrett sees the synoptics reserving the word "sign" for eschatological events which signal the last days, while for John the miracles themselves are the eschatological events.¹
- G. The common words designating Christ's miracles in the gospels are "power" and "sign." "Power" is used to designate the miracles as a revelation of divine power, while "sign" is used to confirm Jesus' divine authority.
- H. "Work" is used for creation in the LXX (Gen 2:3); it is also used in salvation history (Exod 34:10; Ps 66:5; 111:6). By the use of the term "work" Jesus associates His miracles with creation and the salvific works of His Father in the past: "My Father is working still, and I am working" (John 5:17). Jesus is so closely united with the

¹Barrett, John, p. 64.

Father that it may be said that the Father Himself performs Jesus' works (14:10).

- I. "Sign" is a narrower term than "work," though both terms are used for miracles: "sign" is not used for the whole ministry of Jesus. Both terms "works" and "signs" share as a background the OT description of God acting on the behalf of man.

III. The Relationship of "Miracles" and "Works" in Revelation

A. Miracles are performed by devils.

1. The miracles ("signs") in Revelation are not performed by Christ or His disciples. Rather they are performed by the adversary--the beast (13:13,14), the spirits of devils (16:14), and the false prophet (19:20). At Rev 12:1,3; 15:1 it is used in the sense of a sign of foreboding future events.
2. The devils use miracles ("signs") to proclaim the authority of Satan. While Christ's miracles brought healing and peace, Satan's bring deception (13:14).
3. The devils invite those dwelling on the earth to make an image to the beast, and they urge the whole world to make war against the people of God (16:14).
4. The devils have powerful weapons, which are

miracles ("signs"), at their disposal to accomplish their task.

5. At Matt 24:24 false Christs and false prophets are predicted to arise and show great "signs" and "wonders" "so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."
6. Paul, speaking of the antichrist, states that he will work "with all power and with pretended (deceptive) signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish . . . " (2 Thess 2:9,10).
7. Miracles have been used by Satan throughout history to deceive (Gen 3:1-6; Exod 7:10,11, 21,22; 8:7; 1 Sam 28:11-14; Acts 8:9-11; 2 Thess 2:9).
8. The miracles of the devil's allies are extremely effective since "the whole earth followed the beast with wonder" (13:3).
9. Their power is also revealed by the fact that he gathers the leaders, the kings of the world, "for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (16:14). The miracles are effective because God's people do not work miracles in Revelation.

B. Works of the saints counteract those of devils.

1. The saints must combat Satan with "works."
Their deeds must match in power the miracles

of the devils. Since miracles are seen and observed, so deeds must be seen and observed.

2. The miracles of the devil, such as calling fire down from heaven (13:13), is a counterfeit reproduction of the fire Elijah called down (1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Kgs 1:10). John, writing here, would well remember when he himself had wanted to call fire down from heaven (Luke 9:54).

3. The aim of the miracles of the devil will cause the world to worship the beast (13:15). It is the intention of Satan to lead the whole world astray, whereas Jesus came to save the world (Heb 2:15).

IV. Prediction of Future "Works" by Christ in John 14:12

A. Christ's prediction announced in John 14:12.

1. Christ predicted at John 14:12 that His disciples would do "greater works" than Himself.
2. For John, "works" essentially reveal the power and character of God. The disciples were to reveal God primarily by their actions in following the example of their Lord (John 13:15,17), and as the world would see their love for each other (13:35) the world would be attracted to Christ.
3. William Hendriksen emphasizes that "works" in

Rev 14:12 represent the miracles Jesus had been doing in the physical realm, while the greater miracles which His disciples would do would be performed in the spiritual realm.¹

B. Deeds emphasized.

1. If Revelation were written earlier than the Gospel, then there would be reason to believe that the "greater works" in John 14:12 would emphasize deeds, since in Revelation God's people do not work miracles.
2. If John were written before Revelation, then Revelation qualifies the statement to emphasize deeds over miracles. Another evidence in support of this conclusion is that the disciples do not perform miracles in the Gospel of John, while the saints do not perform miracles in Revelation. In either case deeds would be accentuated over miracles.
3. If John would have desired his readers to be certain that miracles were meant, he could have used the phrase "signs and wonders" (John 4:48; Acts 4:30; 14:3; etc.). This expression was specifically used for miracles.
4. The disciples would not work greater miracles

¹Hendriksen, John, 1:273.

qualitatively than Christ performed. It would be absurd to consider working greater miracles than that of the raising of Lazarus (John 11:38-44). The disciples would affect more people by their deeds, because they would be greater in number and bear witness throughout the world.

5. The saints are passive in their role throughout the book. They have "little power" (3:8); they go through tribulation (2:9); during the persecution reported in the fifth seal, their slain bodies are under the altar (6:9), and they flee into the wilderness (12:6).
6. Yet, these saints appear as victors numbered as the 144,000 (7:4) as well as "a great multitude which no man could number," and they sing the triumphant song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (15:3). They have achieved victory over the devil because their deeds have demonstrated the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb (7:14).

Conclusion

Our study has shown that the saints do not perform miracles in Revelation, the emphasis in John 14:12 on "greater works," therefore, essentially refers to deeds. The "works" of the saints are more than "a

symbolic anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality," as Barrett defines "signs." Their works are the very reality of Christ Himself being manifest in the believer. Therefore, they win over the machinations of the devil's allies, thus making the deeds of the saints more powerful than the miracles of the devil.

More than that, after the death of the saints, "their deeds follow them" (14:13). This can be interpreted in two ways, as the SDABC indicates: (a) these works follow them in the sense that there can be no separation between what a man is and what he does. In this case it would refer to the deeds of the saints continuing in heaven within the same ethical mold which they adopted here on earth; (b) it could refer to the influence that their lives will have upon others subsequent to their deaths.

The false trinity (the dragon, beast, and false-prophet, 16:14) are to be cast into the lake of fire (19:20), and those whom they have misled are slain and finally eaten by birds who gorge themselves with their flesh (vs. 21). While the deeds of the saints have a positive and productive aftermath, the miracles of the devils come to an abrupt and final end.

Since the deeds of the saints authenticate their discipleship for Christ, deeds play an extremely important part in the last days. While the allies of the devil perform miracles, it is our deeds which must represent

Christ. Only by our good works will the world know that we are genuinely Christ's followers. It is by our lifestyle that the world will see the living reality of our Savior.

Miracles at the end of time will be more diabolical than ever in this world's history. The Christian's deeds will have to stand firm amidst great delusions aimed at destroying the truth. May God help us to stand firm against straying from His will.

CHAPTER V

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This is the first time I have taken the opportunity to trace so thoroughly the meaning of a word which is used extensively throughout the Bible. In this case, it is the word ergon ("work"), in both its substantival and verbal forms. I investigated this word in its 564 usages in the LXX and in its 232 usages in the NT. I categorized the various usages and analyzed their contribution to the understanding of salvation. I began my study by examining the concept of sanctification in the book of Revelation. Soon the subject became too broad and cumbersome, so I limited the investigation to the study of ergon in Revelation. Then I went back to the Gospel of John to discover how the author of Revelation used the word in that book. Finally, I retraced my way to the OT to gain the primary meaning of the Hebrew words that have been translated as ergon in the LXX.

This study was a spiritual adventure which led me to the concept of the covenant. When I found the study of the word ergon becoming dry and listless, I was forced to investigate the concept of the covenant, first in the OT and then in the NT. I discovered that the covenant relationship provides the power to do the works enjoined

by God. I was delighted to find the emphasis of the covenant in John's Gospel as well as in Revelation.

The covenant puts vitality into the subject, since the relationship between the Suzerain (Christ) and the vassal (the human being) adds the dimensions of warmth and acceptance. What a thrill to study next "works," which those who are in Christ most willingly accomplish when enveloped in a love relationship with Him.

I was interested to discover that the same categories of works existed in the OT and the NT: good works, evil works, God's judgment, etc. In the NT, however, the God-man, Jesus Christ, is made more fully manifest. He came to this earth as the Suzerain of the covenant, but went through the experience of a vassal. The recognition of this endears us to Christ.

I was also interested in the fact that the overwhelming emphasis of ergon in the OT and the NT points to exterior ethical behavior. But when we are within the covenant relationship with Christ, we have nothing to fear as far as works are concerned. Works are the grateful response to the existing love relationship.

When I compared the usage of ergon in the Gospel of John with Revelation, I was impressed with the part works play in the life of the believer. Christ is very concerned that Christians proclaim their faith by their works. This realization has caused me to ponder my own relationship with Christ, and it has increased my desire

to live in harmony with Christ's requirements. These requirements are not burdensome when I consider the covenant relationship which has been made available through the Cross of Christ. Though I have at times emphasized either justification or sanctification in my ministry, as a result of this study I desire to bring a balanced approach between the two to the people whom I serve.

Since the book of Revelation does not emphasize miracles as emanating from Christians, but rather from Satan, I realize more than ever before that the only exterior sign which can witness to the world is our works. Christ performed erga ("miracles") to authenticate His ministry, while in Revelation the saints' erga (their "deeds") now authenticate their discipleship of God to the world. It is humbling to realize that our works will charm and attract nonbelievers to examine the claims of Christ in their lives.

Once again, I want to lean heavily upon the covenantal relationship with Christ. Here is the fountain which bubbles with pure, everlasting water, and I wish to drink from that well to gain sustenance. This covenantal relationship provides perpetual refreshment and the necessary power to accomplish the works which Christ desires in my life. Christ's death has made this a reality, and for this I am eternally grateful.

APPENDIX 1

ERGON AS USED IN THE LXX

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON

ERGON AS USED IN THE LXX

The LXX uses ergon for such activities as "plowing" (Isa 28:24), "weaving" (Isa 19:9, 10), "smelting" (Exod 27:19), or "hewing wood" (2 Chr 2:10). A specific use of ergon is found in the translation of sibhlāh ("forced labor," Exod 2:11) and mas (Exod 1:11, "compulsory labor").

Ergon and ergasesthai appear most commonly for asah pā al abhadh, mela'khah, or their derivatives. These words denote an "action," "work" or "achievement," and more or less cover the various senses of the Gk. term term. . . . Thus in the Gr. translation many words which denote conduct in general are brought under the concept of work. . . .¹

Since we are not analyzing works as labor we will spend the remainder of this study analyzing ergon in its ethical sense.²

Good Deeds

Those who are good in the biblical sense serve God, not some stranger but their rightful Sovereign, the Lord their God (Jer 37(30):9). Ergon here would mean serving their rightful king. The deeds of the righteous are "in the hands of God" (Eccl 9:1). This means that

¹Georg Bertram, "Ergon," TDNT, 2:636-37.

²Ibid., 2:635.

human beings are not independent, but are in the power and under the direction of God. Though a person may be righteous, "there is no man that knows either love or hatred, though all are before their face" (Eccl 9:1). Man is unable to judge by his righteousness whether he will be the object of God's pleasure or displeasure. He is unable to determine whether he will gain happiness or unhappiness by his righteousness.¹

Furthermore, the righteous, though they claim to do good deeds, do not claim perfection. The LXX translates legach ("learning," "teaching")² used in Job 11:4, and rarely elsewhere, with ergon. In this text we find Zophar putting words into Job's mouth, probably referring back to Job's speech in 10:7. Though Job did not use the exact words stated by Zophar, they are a summary of Job's thought. Job does not claim that he is perfect, he simply is defending the fact that he is not as wicked as his friends contend. At Job 22:3 Eliphaz makes God appear unconcerned as to man's righteousness, as if it does not matter whether man's works are blameless or not. This view is unlike the Psalmist who states that God "the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him" (Ps 147:11; cf. Ps 149:4).

¹Adam Clarke, Clarke's Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon, n.d.), 2(Bk. 1):828.

²Francis Brown, and S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 544.

Good deeds or righteous deeds are done in conformity to God's will. It was this fact that gave Elijah on Mount Carmel the authority to state: "for thy sake I have wrought these works" (1 Kgs 18:36). Keil and Delitzsch understand C-âsîthî ("I have done") to mean not only the predicted drought and the work which Elijah has been doing, but the miracles which are about to be performed.¹ The LXX interprets Prov 16:4 as "the works of the humble man are manifest with God." Literally the MT states: "God made everything with respect to its end."² Instead of teaching the doctrine of reprobation where God creates some men to suffer eternal punishment, it teaches "eternal and unchangeable order of things that causes sin to bring suffering and death."³ The interpreters of the LXX gave this text an exposition of their own by stating that God clearly and easily understands or observes the deeds of the righteous who are humble.

Good deeds are done by direction of the Lord. At 1 Kgs 13:11 erga refer to deeds of a prophet of God delivering a message to Jeroboam that Josiah would bring retribution against the apostate priests. 2 Kgs 23:19 uses the term erga to describe the work of destruction now fulfilled by Josiah against the altars of the apostate

¹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, 1 Kings, COT, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1973), 3(Bk. 1):249

²"For himself" [Prov 16:4], SDABC, 3:1002.

³Ibid., p. 1003.

priests as prophesied years before. This was more than a work of destruction; it was a work of restoration of the true worship of God.

The LXX translates ma^{ca}'seh seven times with ergon in the context that men who love God and obey His laws will reap God's blessings. The Lord will bless the work of their hands (Deut 30:9; 24:19; 28:12), their work upon the land (Deut 23:20), and all that the faithful undertake to do (Deut 2:7; 15:10). Ma^{ca}'seh also describes the good deeds of Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:30). The good deeds revolve around the humility of Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:26). The Lord honored him with "very great riches and honor" (2 Chron 32:27).

Rewards

A man's deeds bring rewards. Isaiah declares that the righteous will receive rewards (Isa 3:10); "therefore shall they eat the fruits of their works." Rewards grow out of character as easily as fruit develops from a tree. This is not a demonstration of righteousness by works, but a demonstration of fruit-bearing faith. Boaz when speaking to Ruth understood that good deeds would bring rewards (Ruth 2:12). Asa, the third king of Judah, was given encouragement that for his strong stand against idolatry he would be rewarded (2 Chron 15:7).

The righteous for their works will attain peace, ensure rest, and be confident forever (Isa 32:17). The one working righteousness (ergazomenos dikaiosunēn) is one

who walks uprightly (hōlēkh tāmīm) (Ps 14[15]:2); 14:2a describes human behavior while 2b ("and speaks truth from his heart") describes the action of the inward nature. This speaking does not simply come from a man's mouth; it describes the location of action, not the instrument. Therefore, man does not think of fraud and hypocrisy but the truth. "We have three characteristics here: a spotless walk, conduct ordered according to God's will, and a truth-loving mode of thought."¹ Tāmīm indicates one who is free from objection, blameless, and complete.² This word is translated by "perfect" many times in the OT; when it refers to God, the word is used in its absolute sense (Deut 32:4; 2 Sam 22:31; Ps 15:30[31]). Psalm 4, which refers to man, identifies the worker of righteousness as one who walks uprightly or blamelessly, and defines these works under five positive and five negative categories.³

The one working righteousness answers the

¹F. Delitzsch, Psalms, COT, 5[Bk. 1]:212-13.

²Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1951), pp. 1031-32.

³The positive features are the following: (1) walks blamelessly (vs. 2), (2) does what is right (vs. 2), (3) speaks truth from his heart (vs. 2), (4) in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord (vs. 4), (5) swears to his own hurt and does not change (vs. 4). The negative features are as follows: (1) does not slander with his tongue (vs. 3), (2) does no evil to his friend, (3) nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor (vs. 3), (4) does not put out his money at interest (vs. 5), (5) does not take a bribe against the innocent.

question in Ps 15:1: "Who shall sojourn in thy tent: Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?" The fact that this is God's hill, a holy hill, alludes to the idea that without holiness "no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). The SDABC goes a step further by stating that the phrase "thy holy hill . . . implies the elevation of the perfect character above the low places of ordinary character. The character pleasing to God and man must climb above the commonplace."¹ Those who seek the Lord do his judgment; they "obey his commands" (Zeph 2:3, Jerusalem Bible).

Creative Work of God

The LXX describes God's creative work by using the word ergon (Gen 2:2). The Psalmist declares that the heavens were made by the word of the Lord (Ps 33:6). This denotes a united cooperation between the word which declared a thing into being and the work which fashioned it. God's creative work is often referred to as "work of thy hands" (Ps 137[138]:8; Job 14:15; Isa 29:23).

At Gen 2:2,3 ergon is used three times in translating melāk'hāh ("occupation," "work").² This describes the creative work from which God rests. This passage describes the completion of creation week. The very ergon which had caused labor now brings God rest as He surveys His work. Therefore, ceasing to create is

¹"Thy holy hill" [Ps 15:1], SDABC 3:663.

²BDB, pp. 521-522.

called resting at Exod 20:11; this brings Him refreshment at Exodus.¹ When the LXX refers to God's creation, it refers to the specific works of God--the heavens and the earth and its creatures (Ps 8:3). These all bear witness to His creative genius. Thus, His creation brings Him joy and satisfaction (Ps 103[104]:31). We have a God whose very being thrives on creation. God has a purpose in His creation and man is not to question it (Isa 45:11). The creatures of His hands whom God has made have freedom of choice to do as they wish, yet ultimate control is still in His hands. He has given power to those who produce armaments and those who destroy weapons of war (Isa 54:16,17).

The mighty works of creation are a testimony to God's greatness (Ps 8:6). The mighty works of God point to the Creator; "Thou art clothed with honor and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who hast stretched out the heavens like a tent . . . " Ps 103(104):1,2. The glory of God is here transferred to light which was first created by God and now daily illuminates us. The Hebrew participle implies continuous illumination. He stretched out the heavens as easily as we stretch out a tent and curtain (Isa 54:2; 40:22). A similar thought is proclaimed at Ps 18(19):1: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork." Though the synonym poieō is

¹Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentatuch, 1:68.

used, the context is similar to that in which ergon is used in several passages in the Psalms. The vast galaxies of stars and planets proclaim the power of God as 'ēl ("the Almighty"). He has created the firmament.¹ The attestation to God's power pours forth every day from that which He has created. God's wonderful erga are not only inanimate objects like the stars, but even man's body declares His greatness by the "hearing ear and the seeing eye" (Prov 20:12). At Ps 89:16 we note that God continues to guard and watch over His creatures. Ta erga sou ("your works") here (Ps 89:16) are synonymous with "your servants" ("human beings"). God does not in a deistic fashion forget His creatures, but He continues to guide them throughout their lives. Isa 64:8 appeals to the fact that God is the Creator and men are only clay in the hands of the potter.

God's Acts

The acts of God take place in history; this is not mythology, but God participating in the human context of time (Josh 24:31, Ps 43[44]:1).

¹Firmament probably came from the influence of Alexandrian theories of a "stone vault" of heaven. They translated raqi'a with the word stereoma, which suggested a firm, solid structure. This Greek concept was reflected by the Latin firmamentum which was adopted by the KJV. It would be better to translate the word by "open expanse of the heavens" as is used by the NASB, Gen 1:20, viz. the the atmosphere where the birds fly. J. Barton Payne. "Raqi'a," TWOT, 2 vols., ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:862.

God works salvation in the midst of the earth (Ps 73[74]:12). The Psalmist takes delight in contemplating God's previous deliverances of His people. God's work is done faithfully; He is the Rock. For this reason His erga are perfect (Deut 32:4). He is the Rock upon which the church rests (Matt 16:18) and upon which the individual believer is to build his house of faith (Matt 7:24). Since God's work is perfect, He will not leave it unfinished. He will carry His plan through to its completion. God works for them "who wait for him" (Isa 64:4). Those who have spiritual discernment have unfathomable opportunities before them. It is God's desire to vindicate His cause; therefore, Babylon is destroyed (Jer 28[51]:10).

The wonderful works of God bring Him honor and majesty (Ps 110[111]:3); they are His mighty acts (Ps 144[145]:4). No one on earth or in heaven compares with God; His works cannot be compared with any other gods, since the other gods are not able to answer man's petitions or to be a help in time of need. For this reason His host is "exceeding great" (Joel 2:11).

God has everything under His control. God destroys and regenerates empires to demonstrate that a supernatural agent is at work. Only through the permissive hand of God can nations ascend in power and later descend into oblivion (Ps 45[46]:8). For this

reason He is considered "great" and His deeds are considered "terrible" (Ps 65[66]:3).

The OT prophets were continually asking the Israelites to "remember to extol his erga" (Job 36:24). Only a correct understanding of past history as to the means by which God has led them will help His children to walk correctly in the future and to see themselves in perspective. Therefore, all nations are to know God's deeds (Ps 104[105]:1; 117[118]:17); these deeds are to be sung in songs of joy (Ps 106[107]:22).

Though God is faithful and true, and in spite of the fact that His works were mighty, His people "forgot His works" (Ps 105[106]:13). Psalm 106 is an asyndeton, giving us a swift portrayal of sins committed by a backslidden people. His people were impatient and "did not wait for his counsel" (Ps 105[106]:13).

Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king, learned through his own experience that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and that "his works are true" (trans. LXX--Dan 4:34). If only the Israelites had learned that lesson, how much more prosperous they would have been. Instead, years later, because of their unbelief and backsliding, God brought the retribution of the Babylonians upon them. This retribution was not God's choice, rather, it was the result of the Israelite's rebellion, first in the

wilderness (Ps 94[95]:9), and later at the time of the Babylonian invasion.

God's Acts--Miracles

God's acts are often understood in the sense of miracles. At Ps 45(46):8(9), where it states "he has wrought desolations" (^asher śām shammôth), the LXX uses terata ("wonders") to indicate that God's work is in the realm of the miraculous. For God is here seen as controlling the mighty movements of nations, breaking their bows and shattering their spears.

In Ps 76(77):11, the phrase erga tou Kuriou ("works of the Lord"), through Hebrew parallelism, is united in thought with the pele' (Greek thaumasiôn--"wonders") of the Lord. Victor P. Hamilton claims that "preponderantly both the verb and substantive refer to the acts of God, designating either cosmic wonders or historical achievements on behalf of Israel."¹ Psalm 77 deals with the miracles of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. This event is used as the finest example of God's power to save His people. As the Psalmist describes the miracle of the deliverance at the Red Sea, the waters are personified as fleeing from the mighty presence of the Lord (Ps 77:16).

The Psalmist also declares in this Psalm that God led the people of Israel by the hand of Moses and Aaron

¹Victor P. Hamilton, "Pālā'," TWOT, 2 vols., ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:723.

(vs. 20). In the OT the miracles ('ôth) performed by God usually revolved around the escape from Egypt and the plagues. Most of the seventy-nine usages of 'ôth refer to these miraculous signs as pledges or attestations of divine presence and interposition (Exod 4:8, 9; 10:2). Of the seventy-nine times 'ôth occurs, twenty-five are applied to the plague narratives in Exodus. It includes the range of meaning which is covered by the Greek word sēmeion ("sign").

Since the miraculous element is such an important part of ergon when used concerning the acts of God, it would be helpful to note the purposes that "signs" or miracles served in the leadership role of Moses and Aaron as they guided God's people from Egypt, an experience of deliverance. This also becomes crucial as a symbol of release from the slavery of sin (Exod 6:6; 2 Sam 7:23; 1 Chron 17:21; etc.). According to Exod 4:8, a sign has a "voice," bearing witness for God in the person of God's selected agent. That a voice is thus given to the sign indicates a clear witness to the divine mission of the person who performs the sign (Ps 105:27).¹ In those cases, Exod 4:9 provides an example: Moses is told that if Pharaoh does not listen to the sign, which is to be interpreted by legolekhā ("your [Moses'] voice"), Moses is to take the water of the river and pour it on the dry land

¹Keil and Delitzsch, Exodus, COT, 1[Bk. 1]:450.

and it will become blood. Here we find Moses endowed with the word of God and the power of God.

It is clear that when Moses speaks with Pharoah, the latter understands Moses as a spokesman from God (5:2). The voice of God is connected with the commandments of God (Exod 15:26). When Jethro is giving counsel to Moses he pleads: "Listen now to my voice: I will give you counsel" (Exod 18:19). The implication is clear that obedience to the voice is requested. At Exod 19:5 there is a direct connection between obedience and commandments: "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine."

For this reason in Exodus the signs of God have a voice of authority, to the extent of causing people to tremble. These "signs" then gave Moses the credentials authenticating his ministry to Israel and provided recognition before Pharoah.

While in Egypt the Israelites had lost faith in God; therefore, one of the purposes for Moses' leadership was to renew faith in God among the Jews. It was the purpose of the miracles given to Moses by God to help instill faith. "And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and

that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped" (Exod 4:30,31; see also Ps 106:11,12).

The miracles also served to bring the faith of Moses to maturity, for his faith was growing, too, and his impetuous character had to be subdued. We see this demonstrated when the people complain to Moses that he has made them "offensive in the sight of Pharaoh" by causing them to have to gather their own straw yet produce the same number of bricks. Moses then turns to the Lord and cries: "O Lord, why hast thou done evil to this people? Why didst thou ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he has done evil to this people, and thou has not delivered thy people at all" (Exod 5:22,23). Later at Mount Sinai, after the children of Israel had made a golden calf and committed idolatry, we note a growth of true humility in Moses when he states that he would rather be blotted from the book of life than to have the sins of the Israelites unforgiven (Exod 32:32). God suggested the destruction of the Israelites while Moses argued against this judgment on the basis of the "signs" which God wrought in Egypt. If God would destroy them now this would cause the Egyptians to question God's motives. Moses also argued on the basis that God would be reneging

on the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (32:11-13).¹

Repeatedly the Israelites wavered in their faith toward God, and each time they wavered the Lord sent another miracle to demonstrate His protection and establish their faith (Exod 5:19-21; 8:21,23; 14:10-13,30).

The miracles were also intended to arouse knowledge of Jehovah among the Egyptians and to demonstrate to them how useless their gods were (Exod 7:5; 8:19; 9:27,28).

Work's and God's Judgment

In the OT it is clear that God is not only a God of mercy (Exod 33:19; Ps 102:13; Isa 54:8) but also a God of judgment (Ps 9:7; Ezek 5:8; Eccl 12:14). Psalm 61[62]:12 says, " . . . mercy is thine, O Lord; for thou wilt recompense every one according to his works" (LXX). The mercy here described is not one of indiscriminate indulgence, but a mercy which is in line with the

¹When Moses requested his name to be blotted out of the book God had written, he was actually asking to have his name removed from the book of life which was a register of all those who held citizenship in the theocratic community of Israel (cf. Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1). It was a common idea in the secular world that "when a criminal's name was removed from the civic register of an Asiatic town, he lost his citizenship." (Martin Kiddle, The Revelation of St. John [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1940], p. 47). At Rev 3:5, the direct parallel to Exod 32:32, Christ uses a strong double negative ou me and the first aorist future of exaleipso--"I will not blot his name out of the book of life."

character and righteousness of God. When a man is applauded in the Bible for doing good works, it is always God's mercy which is in play, for no man deserves rewards for his own efforts (Exod 33:19; Ps 102:13; Isa 54:8).

Ergon is used with the meaning of judgment thirteen times in the LXX (Job 24:14; Prov 24:12; Hab 1:5, etc.). Since God is characteristically merciful, judgment is considered a "strange work" for Him (Isa 28:21). Franz Delitzsch points out that the strangeness comes from the fact that God will have to act "towards His own people as He once acted towards their foes."¹ Calvin reminds us that God's strange act is caused by Israel's "strange conduct."²

God's judgment is based on man's works (Ps 61 [62]:12; Prov 24:12; Isa 40:10). God can correctly judge man's works because He "knows the hearts of all . . . formed the breath for all, he knows all things" (Prov 24:12). This text reveals God's omniscience as well as His ability to read the motives of each individual. God's judgment is fair because He is the nātsar, the protector or keeper of men's souls. This word means He is a guardian who protects from danger.³

The erga of God, His judgments, can be such a forceful display of power that they fill with alarm those

¹Delitzsch, Isaiah. COT, 7[Bk. 2]:13.

²Calvin, Isaiah, 2:229.

³BDB, p. 665.

who observe them (Hab 3:2). Habakkuk is filled with awe at the coming retribution. For this reason he cries out for mercy. Habakkuk desires that the Lord again renew the work in the midst of the years. The meaning here is that God would renew life in the midst of the years while His people still have time.

The LXX gives a double explanation to the Hebrew shāma^ctî^â shim^{ca}khā, "I have heard your report," by interpreting it "I heard your report and am terrified; I have considered your works and am struck with amazement." Both interpretations would appear to be valid.¹ Though this judgment from God would bring trial to His people, it eventually would mean that the Isrealites would be reestablished following the destruction of the Babylonian Kingdom.

The judgment will be severe, for Habakkuk speaks of raising up the Chaldeans to execute God's judgment. God will do a work "that you would not believe if told" (Hab 1:5). In order to put the full weight of the judgment upon the word, Habakkuk keeps back the author by making pō^cāl apparently neuter: "The impellent force is in the work itself" (Exod 1:20).² Keil and Delitzsch feel that "although pō^cēl is written indefinitely,"

¹W. J. Deane, Habakkuk, Pulpit Commentary, ed. A. Plummer (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., n.d.), p. 50.

²Paul Kleinert, The Book of Habakkuk, 12 vols., Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1960), 7:13.

lacking any pronoun, Jehovah Himself is speaking here.¹

The combination of the gal, tāmāh ("amazed") with the hiphil of the same verb makes it stronger, emphasizing the highest degree of astonishment.

At Jer 27(50):29 one finds equitable retribution upon the oppressor himself: "Render to her according to her works; according to all that she has done, do to her" The most just punishment is that which is inflicted on the cruel themselves. Christ laid down this principle when he stated: "For the measure you give will be the measure you get back." Since God is judge of the world, a principle is here set forth that they who unjustly deal with others must someday themselves receive the reward of their works. God judges Babylon for her zādhāh ("pride", "insolence"). This pride is not only against Israel, but it is against God who is the kedhōsh yisrā'ēl ("the Holy One of Israel"). It is because the Babylonians have ignominiously oppressed the very people God has chosen that they have been sacrilegious toward Him.² The deserved humiliation of Babylon because of her pride is predicted by earlier prophets (Isa 13:11; 14:13ff.; 47:7,8; Hab 2:5,8). Yahweh opens His armory from which He unleashes "the weapons of his wrath" which

¹Keil and Delitzsch, Minor Prophets, COT, 10:57.

²Calvin, Jeremiah and Lamentations, 5:172.

are identified at Isa 13:5 as the nations which execute judgment.

Evil Deeds

The verb ergazomai ("I work") nineteen times translates the Hebrew pā^cal ("work," "do," "perform"); once it translates the Hebrew bāghadh ("treat faithlessly") used in the phrase "workers of iniquity," or "work iniquity," or "do iniquity." Twice ergon is translated with the phrase "works of iniquity" and "works of transgressors." Twenty-three uses of ergon used in the sense of evil deeds are found in the book of Psalms most often in the expression "workers of iniquity." When pā^cal describes man's deeds or actions, it refers to his moral acts, most often his negative acts, but sometimes his positive act.¹

David is troubled by the works of the ungodly who triumph over his people; they "eat my people as they would eat bread" (Ps 13[14]:4). "Workers of iniquity" in the Psalms are to be understood "as the concrete embodiment of the principle of evil."² pō^{ca}lē 'āwen are the ones who work iniquity; 'āwen means "trouble," "sorrow," "wickedness."³ Keil and Delitzsch define 'āwen as "breath" (anemos), which is sometimes trouble,

¹Victor P. Hamilton, "pō^cal," TWOT, 2:730.

²"Shall not stand" [Ps 5:5], SDABC, 3:641.

³BDB, pp. 19-20.

"in connection with which one pants, sometimes wickedness, in which there is not even a trace of any thing noble, true, or pure."¹ Matthew, in the NT, refers to the workers of iniquity as ones who have deceived themselves and others by the unwarrantable use of the Lord's name in deceiving others (Matt 7:23). David has in mind those who have banded themselves together against him. The workers of iniquity are calloused; they eat up God's people "as they would eat bread" (Ps 13[14]:4). They do not think they are doing anything more sinful than eating bread. As a matter of fact, they justify their actions by doing it; they are like beasts of prey without any feeling for humanity. The "workers of iniquity" are completely addicted to wickedness. Under the pretense of friendship they deceive their neighbors by declaring one thing with their tongues and having a different motive in their hearts (Ps 27[28]:3). The "workers of iniquity" contemplate wickedness in their thoughts and perform it with their hands (Ps 57[58]:2).

The wicked first conceive their malicious deeds in their hearts and then "deal out (pālas) violence" with their hands (Ps 57[58]:2). Pālas ("weigh," "make level") can be interpreted "violence do your hands weigh out."² This is said sarcastically for the wicked pretend to hold

¹Keil and Delitzsch, "Psalms," COT, 5(Bk. 1):122.

²BDB, p. 814.

the balance of justice and dispense to each his reward when violence determines their actions.¹ If pālas is compared with the same word found in Ps 78:50 where God "makes a path for his anger," then Calvin's distinction for interpreting the word "to frame or set in order" is valid; therefore it would mean that those who work iniquities "put into shape the sins which they had first conceived in their thoughts." "In the earth" would indicate that this was not a deed hidden in a corner, but done openly where it could be seen by all.² They nābha^C ("bubble up," "issue forth"³) with reckless or rash words (Ps 93[94]:4). Their words are āthāg^C ("impudent," "arrogant," "forward"⁴) so that they disgrace themselves by their vain boasting.⁵

The characteristics of the workers of iniquity are described in Ps 100(101):8 as: (1) disloyal (vs. 3), (2) having perverse hearts (vs. 4), (3) slandering their neighbors (vs. 5), (4) having haughty looks and arrogant hearts (vs. 5), (5) practising deceit (vs. 7), (6) uttering lies (vs. 7). Proverbs 10:29 indicates that the "workers of iniquity" forfeit God's protection so they are

¹Carl Bernhard Moll, Psalms, Lange's Commentary, 5:351.

²Calvin, Psalms, 2:370.

³BDB, pp. 615-16.

⁴Ibid., p. 801.

⁵Calvin, Psalms, 4:13.

without it and then are destroyed. Instead of resting at night, evildoers lay awake devising plans to gain lands and houses they covet. As soon as "morning dawns" they begin to execute their plans (Mic 2:1). Finally, "their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood" (Isa 59:6).

The concept "workers of iniquity" is carried over to the NT and is used by Jesus (Matt 7:23; Luke 13:27) for those who have deceived themselves and others, and use the Lord's name for advancing their own cause.

Sigmund Mowinkel incorrectly considers 'awen ("iniquity") to be a magical power and poale 'awen ("workers of iniquity") to be "sorcerers who by their powerful spells brought about the affliction of the righteous . . ."¹ Hamilton considers the "workers of iniquity" to be "foreign enemies who harrass and gloat over their conquests of Israel and her King."² Analysis of the eighteen instances in the Psalms as well as in Isa 31:2; Hos 6:8; Job 31:3; 34:8, 22; Prov 10:29; 21:15 indicate that the phrase can mean his enemies (Ps 5:5; 6:8; 58[59]:5).³ Hamilton does not properly consider the word kōl-po^{ca}le ("all the workers," Ps 5:5; 6:8;

¹Sigmund Mowinkel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, 2 vols., trans. D. R. AP-Thomas (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 1:199.

²Hamilton, "Work, Deed," TWOT, 2:730.

³This may especially be so when the word goy is used as at Ps 58(59):5 meaning pagan peoples or heathen.

13[14]:4; 35[36]:12; 91[92]:9; 100[101]:8) which include more than his enemies. At Ps 57(58):2 the workers of iniquity commit evil in their hearts so it is more than evil committed on the exterior by enemies. When the phrase is used by Job, it refers to wickedness of which Job himself is accused (Job 31:3) or the association with wicked people he may have had (Job 34:8). Hosea describes "the workers of iniquity" as Gileadites (Hos 6:8) who were of the tribe of Gad. In this case they are not heathen but of the people of Israel. Therefore, the term has a broader meaning than heathen enemies; rather it applies to those whose motives are evil and therefore commit evil acts.

Idolatry

One of the common evils of the Israelites was their idolatry. Jeremiah speaks of their idolatry and calls their idols a "work of delusion" (Jer 10:15, RSV). In addition to that, they are worthless. Literally, hebhel means "vapor" or "breath," a nonentity. In the time of their visitation they will perish. This is unlike "he who is the portion of Jacob" (Jer 10:16 RSV). Jeremiah concludes by affirming the creatorship of Yahweh and his special relationship to Israel. Yahweh, the yōtsēr ("former," "maker") of all things, is the one who has chosen Israel as the tribe of His inheritance. Those within the covenant do good works, but those outside the covenant partake of evil works. The covenant is the

concept constantly in the background against which their deeds are contrasted.

No wickedness can be worse than when the spiritual leaders perform wickedness. At Hos 6:9 the priests are pictured as murdering those on the way to Shechem. So far have they fallen from the covenant relationship that instead of bringing shālôm they bring rātsach ("murder"). This was the very place which had been the cultic center where the covenant had been first given to Abraham (Gen 12:6,7); in its immediate neighborhood where it had been renewed by Jacob (Gen 33:19, 20), where the covenant had been renewed after the fall of Ai (Josh 8:30-35), and finally where it was renewed again by Joshua shortly before his death (Josh 24:1-28). In this very place, filled with the hallowed memories of the covenant ordinances, the priests break the very intent of the covenant by acts of murder.

In spite of the wicked deeds of His people who have eirgasanto pseude ("wrought falsehood") (Hos 7:1), God is faithful to His promise in the covenant and still desires to "restore the fortunes" of His people, "when I would heal Israel (Hos 6:11). Rapha ("heal") is used by Hosea for redemption (5:13; 6:1). It also is a result of a restored covenant reaction (14:4). At Hos 14:3 the people have just made a pledge regarding three of their outstanding sins: (1) on the expectation of help from Assyria (5:13; 7:11), (2) on trusting in the horses and

chariots of Egypt (7:11), and (3) on the work of their hands (idolatry, 13:2). The people approach God as the Caananites approach their deities, for whom the moral standards of their lives are unimportant, for whom the meaning "my people" has been forgotten. As a result their religion is a deceitful charade; for the priests who serve in the holy sanctuary are robbers and thieves (6:9; 4:8). In spite of their unfaithfulness, God is still loyal to His people. He will remember them and will be willing to enter into a new covenant relationship in the day of their repentance (Ezek 16:60b).

Bertram's Concept of Ergon in the LXX

Georg Bertram, in his article Ergon in the TDNT, has made some erroneous conclusions concerning the word ergon. He has falsely concluded from his study of the LXX that "everything called ergon in the life of man is sin."¹ He attempts to show that the LXX "often uses erga in malam partem ("connotation of evil") when the reference is to human work."² He claims that this is also true of the verb which "is frequently linked with an object of negative moral character in such a way as to become almost a single concept: adikian, anomian, kaka, pseudos, uperēphanian, ergazesthai."³ He concludes,

¹Bertram, "Ergon," TDNT, 2:644.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

incorrectly, that "the wickedness of all human action is stated as a principle in many foundations."

Bertram states that "human work" is evil, as though good works, as well as evil deeds, stand exclusively outside of God. However, good deeds in the OT were always in conjunction with the covenant relationship with God (Gen 9:16; 17:7,13). They were not done in isolation from God. Bertram ignores the fact that good deeds are done by the direction of the Lord (1 Kgs 13:11). Works become "human" only when done outside the covenant relationship, viz., evil works (1 Kgs 11:11; 19:10,19; Isa 24:5; Jer 11:3; 34:18-11, etc.). His evidence is faulty because the texts quoted where ergon is used are in the context of evil; therefore, it does not point to the conclusion that erga are inherently evil.¹ At Jer 44(51):9, Codex Alexandrinus alone reads ergon instead of kakon in the text of the LXX. At Prov 13:19, it appears that tô^{^C}ebhah ("hateful") is poorly translated by ergon. But in the LXX it is qualified by asebôn ("the wicked") "the true works of the ungodly." This then, is not a statement which includes all works; it refers only to the works of the wicked. At Ezek 23:43, erga does not replace pornēs ("adultery"), it only qualifies pornēs. The erga of a harlot are wicked but this does not clearly state that all erga are wicked as a principle, for there are a

¹Bertram states that "in many cases Hebrew terms like ra^{-C}ah, Jer 44(51):9 . . .; tô^{^C}ebhah, Prov 13:19; taznuth, Eze 23:43; are simply rendered ergon." (Ibid.)

number of statements where erga are good. Isaiah 32:17 declares that "the works (erga) of righteousness shall be peace." Deuteronomy 15:10 states: "You shall give to him freely . . . because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work (tois ergois) and in all that you undertake." Therefore, the meaning of ergon depends on the context rather than selective samples that suggest an all-inclusive principle.

Bertram states: "When legach ("teaching") in Job 11:4 and Cētsah ("counsel") in Job 21:16 are translated ergon, this simply expresses the general thought that all man's action is wicked and corrupt. . . ." ¹ But Job 11:4 is not a statement of fact on the part of God; it is simply a statement made by Zophar in which he questions Job's righteousness. Zophar states: "For say not, I am pure in my works, and blameless before him." In another case Job 21:16 speaks of the "erga of the ungodly" and, therefore, this reference too is invalid as an evidence for Bertram's position.

Bertram concludes that "this negative assessment of human action" ² is influenced by Hellenistic scepticism

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 2:645.

and pessimism.¹ Though "evil works" (approximately some seventy occurrences) outnumber "good works" (some twenty-five occurrences) by three times, this fact does not point to a general understanding of works as being evil. The Bible itself points to the evil nature of man, for "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). Though this, too, is a biblical concept and not a Hellenistic one, it does not eradicate the equally valid fact that an Israelite living under the covenant could do good erga (Deut 15:10; Isa 32:17).

Since Bertram notes a negative view of ergon in the LXX, he carries this over to the NT and notes it there as well, claiming that ergon often denotes human work in the sense of vanity and sinfulness.² In illustrating this, he again is selective in providing examples:

R. 13:12: ta erga tou skotous, cf. (the works of darkness) Eph. 5:11; Gl. 5:19: ta erga tes sarkos (works of the flesh); Jn. 3:19; 7:7; 1 Jn. 3:12; 2 Jn. 11; 2 Tim 4:18; Col. 1:2; Barn. 4:10: erga ponera (works of evil); 1 Jn. 3:8; cf. Jn. 8:41: ta erga tou diabolou (the works of the devil); Jd. 15: erga asebeias (works of wickedness); 2 Pe. 2:8; Barn. 4:1:

¹H. C. Hahn in the NIDNTT finds that in most places where ergon occurs it has a positive meaning in the LXX. Hahn does note that in Hellenistic Judaism man's works are essentially sinful. Yet his evidence is selective, choosing references such as Esd 7:119 which refers to evil deeds and not all deeds as his argument would presuppose. "Ergazomai," New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3 vols., ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1975), 3:1148-49.

²Bertram, "Ergon," TDNT, 2:645.

erga anoma (works of lawlessness); Hb. 6:1;9:14: erga nekra (dead works). In many cases the term is given a negative connotation by a specific context, as in Mt. 23:3; Lk. 11:48; Jn. 8:41; Tt. 1:16.¹

Bertram once again ignores those erga which can be qualified as good works. This can be illustrated by the following examples: Matt 5:16; 26:10, kala erga ("good works"); Luke 24:19, dunatos ergō ("powerful works"); John 5:20; 7:3; 10:25, and 10:33, erga in the sense of miracles; 2 Tim 4:5 ergon euaggelistou ("work of an evangelist") Jas 2:14,17 erga pistis ("works of faith"). This list could be expanded many fold and indicates that there are numerous good works in the NT and this, in turn, greatly weakens Bertram's argument that Hellenistic scepticism and pessimism influenced the OT as well as the NT.

¹Ibid.

APPENDIX 2

ERGON AS USED IN THE NT

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON

ERGON IN THE NT

This study analyzes ergon in the NT, first as it is used in the Gospel of John and then in the remainder of the NT. Major emphasis is given to the Gospel of John since this paper holds to the common authorship of both John and Revelation. By grasping the use of ergon in John, illumination is cast upon the usage of the same word in Revelation.

Ergon in the Gospel of John

The word ergon in John describes the ministry of Jesus. Ergon is first located at the beginning of His ministry at 4:34 where He declares that His food is to do the will of Him who sent Him, and we find it at the end of His ministry at 17:4 where Christ declares that He has accomplished the ergon which His Father gave Him to do. These two verses act as barriers, one at the commencement of His ministry and the other at the close of His ministry.

At 4:34 for the first time in John's Gospel Christ names His Sender based on the past act of sending, ho pempas me ("the one who sent me"). His Father has a will (thelema) which is a specific work, i.e., "his work."

During His priestly prayer Christ declares that he has "accomplished the work" (to ergon teleiōsas) "which thou gavest me to do" (17:4). A. T. Robertson considers the hina introducing an appositional clause, which is especially common in the writings of John. The clause defines the content of the noun brōma ("food") with the resultant meaning "doing the will of him that sent me is my food."¹ The relationship of the two substantives thelema ("will") and ergon corresponds with that of the two verbs. "In order that the work of God may be accomplished at the last moment, His will must have been executed at every moment."² H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey understand the hina clause to be functioning as an adjective³ modifying the noun brōma ("food"). The hina clause indicates that brōma is defined by Christ as doing the will of the One who sent Him. John used the hina normally with a "strong volitive flavor" which was a mannerism of his temperament.⁴ Augustus Tholuck summarizes it well when he states that the final idea of the hina is adhered to "so far as it can express the

¹A. T. Robertson, Historical Research, p. 1078.

²Frederick Louis Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of John, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1893), 1:434.

³H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, eds., A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 270.

⁴James Hope Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 1:211.

striving to do the divine will, though admitting that in the later Greek it was probably used as a mere circumscription of the infinitive.¹ The hina clause then either expresses purpose or it is explanatory. At the conclusion of the Last Discourse, Jesus states that He has finished (teleiōsas aor part.) the ergon which His Father asked Him to do.

Jesus came to do the will of God (4:34; 5:36; 6:38); the works of God are His works (4:34; 5:36; 9:3f.; 10:25,32, 37f.; 14:10; 17:4). Jesus' brōma was to do, as stated so well by Barrett, "the creative will of God, realized in obedience, (which) sustains life."² That Christ fully executed the works outlined by His Father is succinctly expressed by the aorist participle teleiōsas ("having finished"). The word means "reach the goal, to finish." It "looks back upon the completed life of Jesus, and probably upon His death too."³ Since His work was completed there no longer was any reason for His stay here on earth. It was not His desire nor would it fulfill any need to prolong His stay.⁴

In the Gospel, the activity of the Father is

¹Augustus Tholuck, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1860), p. 140.

²Barrett, St. John, p. 201.

³Ibid., pp. 420-421.

⁴Marcus Dods, The Gospel of St. John, EGT, 5 vols., ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1961), 1:841.

characterized as "work" (5:36). The ergon of God comes from the view of the God in the OT who continues His activity of creation, in the form of miracles (9:3), judgments (5:22), and His acts of salvation (4:22). The works of Jesus are done in cooperation with the Father. This claim of working with the Father brought the accusation of blasphemy by the Jews, for they recognized this claim to be a shared experience with the Father and therefore a claim on the part of Christ to be equal with God (10:31-33). When the Jews took up stones to kill Him, Christ asked them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?"¹

The Jews replied: "We stone you for no good work (kalou ergou) but for blasphemy." The Jews admit that his works are kala--good, excellent in their nature, and in characteristic² morally good, noble, and blameless (Kalos is used five times in this chapter--three times of the shepherd, two times of works).³ The very excellence of Christ's erga shows that they must be from the Father. These works reveal in a clear observable manner the unity of the Father with the Son. Every work which was done by

¹Lithazete ("you stone") is here the conative or tendential present which can be used of action which is purposed or attempted, though it is not in reality taking place. (Dana and Mantey, Grammar of the Greek NT, p. 186.)

²Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Co., 1889), p. 322.

³Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon of NT, p. 400.

Christ was done in cooperation with the Father and, therefore, undeniably excellent by those who witnessed them. When Jesus asks the Jews "for which" (poion) ergon they are going to stone Him, poion is used in the qualitative sense.¹ These works as well as His words, originate (ek) from the Father and both truly characterize the person of Christ.

It was Christ's purpose to bring to fulfillment the work of the Father. From this viewpoint the individual miracles of Jesus are called "works." On the basis of chap. 5 is the concept that Jesus' works are one of the three witnesses pointing to the oneness with the Father. The witnesses are the following: (1) John the Baptist (vs. 33); (2) the voice of the Father from heaven (vs. 37); (3) and the erga which He performs (vs. 36). Works also provide the setting for chap. 10. For this reason the concept of ergon provides an important thematic structure by which the activity of Jesus and His relationship with God can be better understood. The various erga (plural) of Jesus' ministry make up the larger single ergon which is the all-inclusive term describing the task given Christ by His Father.² Ergon,

¹A. T. Robertson, Grammar of Greek NT, p. 740.

²R. Heiligenthal understands ergon (sing.) to stand for the Einheit des Werkes ("the unity of the work"); it is the gesamte Offenbarungswirken Jesu ("the complete revelatory operation of Jesus"). (R. Heiligenthal, "Ergon," Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1981), pp. 124-125.

as used by John in a theological sense, carries with it the implication of equality with God.

The works which Christ performed were a complete reflection of the Father's works. Since Christ has life within Himself (John 5:26), this power will be demonstrated as His meizona erga ("greater works"). He will take on the prerogatives of God Himself by giving life to the dead at the resurrection. His works are also in the realm of miracles (John 4:3,21; 9:3,4). Christ's saving power is demonstrated as He works miracles upon individuals (John 9:3). These miracles are performed so the believers can base their faith on a concrete manifestation (John 10:25,32,37,38).

There is a close relationship between Christ's words and works. To believe Christ's words requires a higher level of faith, but if this is beyond the ability of the disciples, then they are requested by Christ to believe on His words because of His works (John 14:10,11,12). Since Christ's works (erga) are synonymous with His miracles in John, they are also the works of God Himself. ". . . there is a complete continuity between the activity of Jesus and the activity of the Father."¹ Jesus' desire is to do the Father's work (ergon). He is able to do the works of the Father because He and His Father are equal (John 14:10).

The central text in John concerning the true

¹Barrett, St. John, p. 63.

understanding of what doing erga really means is found at John 6:28: "Then they said to him, 'What must we do, to be doing the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.'" Commentators have taken this phrase to be a misunderstanding. Christ's listeners, as a result of their legalistic concepts, take the word ergazesthai to mean doing works which will be in accordance with God's will and which will please Him. There is only one work which God requires and that is "that men should put faith in Jesus."¹

The fact that the plural erga is spoken by the crowd while the singular ergon is spoken by Jesus represents a Johannine technique of misunderstanding, according to some scholars.² Urban C. von Wahlde notes that the relationship between faith and works is not an issue in the remainder of the Fourth Gospel. Therefore, it appears unusual to suddenly bring up the concept of faith and works.³

Two passages illuminate ta erga tou Theou ("the works of God"). First, 8:39-47 deals with the works of

¹Ibid., p. 235.

²Barrett, for example, notes John developing the dialogue between the crowd and Jesus by means of a misunderstanding. The crowd hears "the word ergazesthai; and mistakes it because their religious system requires legalistic works, while for Jesus works are an expression of faith in Him" (ibid.).

³Urban C. von Wahlde, "Faith and Works in John 4:28-29," Novum Testamentum 22 (1980):304.

Abraham. Here Christ challenges the crowd to do the work of Abraham, then they would not have the desire to kill Him. He challenges them to be tekna tou Abraam ("children of Abraham") for then they would do the works of Abraham (8:39). Second, at 8:41 Jesus accuses the crowd of doing the erga of their real father, the devil (8:41). He claims that they are doing the wishes of the devil (kai tas epithumias tou patros). In this context "doing his wishes" is synonymous with "doing his works." Clearly this usage is not a legalistic one but action based upon a relationship with the devil. Third to carry the analogy further, Jesus states that if God were their Father they would do the "works of God" (8:39). Von Wahlde correctly concludes "that as used in viii 39-47 to 'do the works' of someone is to do what he would do and to do his wishes. This is clearly the general sense of the phrase." The context is dualistic: the works of God, represented by Abraham, as against the works of the devil.¹

One can note the same dualistic concept at 3:19-21. Jesus states that as opposed to the evil who hate the light, the righteous will come into the light which will hina phanerōthē autou ta erga hoti en Theō estin eirgasmena ("that his deeds have been wrought in God"). Jesus here reveals the inner motives of the wicked and righteous. The emphasis is upon ponera ("wicked") and erga (3:21). The "works" here described are not separate, individual

¹Ibid., p. 311.

deeds, but "those that make up and display their real inner nature and will, the net sum of their lives."¹ Here we note that one's allegiance to either light or darkness is judged by his deeds. This then is not a legalistic usage of the terms.

Therefore, the phrase "works of God" at 6:28 need not be understood in a legalistic sense. Since the term erga is used in the majority of instances as the miracles of Christ, it need not be considered with a negative connotation. More than that, three texts indicate the positive attitude that John has toward erga: 3:19-21; 5:27-29; 8:39-47.

At 3:21, we find a very positive statement. Those who do what is true come to the light; they are spiritual heliotropes attracted by the light so that "it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought by God" (hoti en Theō estin eirgasmena). Robinson points out that "he does not claim that they have been wrought in the sphere of and in the power of God."² This then indicates that erga are not improper or in opposition to the will of God, rather they are in harmony with the will of God.

The point is made that erga (plural) is used in a negative way while ergon is used in a positive way (John 6:28, 29). At 8:39-47 erga is not used in a negative way.

¹Lenski, St. John's, p. 272.

²Robertson, Word Pictures, 5:53.

Here Christ is stating that if His listeners were the children of Abraham they would do the deeds of Abraham. Rather, Jesus charged them with being children of the devil. Therefore, the argument hinges on the fact as to who their father is. The choice here is either God (Abraham) or the devil.

At 5:27-29 Jesus declares that those who have done good will be resurrected to life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. Here the articles (ta agatha, ["the good"], ta phaula, ["the evil"]) give the terms an absolute meaning. The aorist tenses of the participles (poiēsantes ["having done"]) and (praxantes ["having done"]) give a final summary of each class. To Christ deeds are very important in reference to salvation. For this reason it would be wrong to consider deeds as having no meaning.

The traditional interpretation implies that there is a negative connotation to the verb ergazesthai as used with erga and that the question of the listeners is a legalistic one: "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" (6:28) It is assumed that the crowd would attempt by their own actions to accomplish that which is possible only by God. John does not use the term in this way in the remainder of the Gospel. At 3:21 John understands works as having been wrought by God (hina phanerōthē autou ta erga hoti en Theō estin eirgasmena). At 8:39-47 a similar phrase is found (poiein ta erga tou

Abraam, ktl.). In these verses poiein, which is synonymous with ergazasthai, is used. The verb itself does not have a legalistic connotation; rather, it is the choice of father which is important here. At John 9:4 Christ states: "We must work the works of him who sent me . . . (hēmas dei ergazesthai ta erga tou pempsantos me)."

Raymond E. Brown suggests that Jesus probably desired to associate His disciples with His important work. That Jesus wanted this association can be seen at 4:35-38.¹ Though these works are done by agents, Jesus and His disciples, they are God's works. They are the works which comprise the mission of Jesus. In His high-priestly prayer Jesus claimed He had finished the work God had assigned Him to do (17:4).

Here Jesus certainly is accomplishing the work God had assigned Him to do. There is no negative connotation. Though the above evidence indicates that the stress need not be on their doing,² it can be argued that the cultural background would oblige his listeners to mean works in a legalistic sense. Their legalistic concepts may have been set aside by the stringent accusation Jesus had made concerning their materialistic motives of satisfying their hunger and possibly participating in His "new kingdom on earth." It is likely

¹R. E. Brown, John, 1:372.

²John Peter Lange, The Gospel According to John, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1960), p. 217.

that these remarks immediately before the people's response would have changed their legalistic, materialistic reply to one of desiring to accomplish God's will. von Wahlde concludes his analysis of John 6:28-29 by suggesting that "'working (doing) the works of God' is used idiomatically in vi 28 and is equivalent to the phrase 'doing the will of God.'"¹

Though von Wahlde clearly defends his case that the listeners of Jesus are not asking a legalistic question when they ask, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" he does not deal with the answer which Jesus gives. If the audience is asking, "What must we do to do the will of God?" and this is a question used in the general sense of carrying out God's will, as admirably defended by von Wahlde,² then the answer of Jesus, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent," must be an answer dealing with deeds which fit into the will of God.

According to Christ, the work of God is that men should "believe in him whom he (the Father) has sent," Pisteuēte ("believe") is the present subjunctive which implies a continual habit of believing rather than an act taking place at a certain point in time. Pisteuēte defines the work of God which is required by Christ. C. K. Barrett sees the verb pisteuein used almost

¹ von Wahlde, "Faith and Works," p. 314.

² Ibid., pp. 308-11.

synonymously with ginoskein ("to know") (John 6:69 and 17:3 with 3:15).¹ The theme of "knowing" is a covenantal theme. Jer 31:34 does not speak of knowledge given through instruction by man. It is not knowledge acquired by religious instruction. Keil and Delitzsch state:

. . . it is rather knowledge of divine grace based upon the inward experience of the heart, which knowledge the Holy Spirit works in the heart by assuring the sinner that he has indeed been adopted as a son of God through the forgiveness of his sins. This knowledge, as being an inward experience of grace, does not exclude religious instruction, but rather tacitly implies that there is intimation given of God's desire to save and of His purpose of grace.²

Rather than having human mediators and symbols such as the altar of incense and lambs, the believer now has the reality of Christ ministering His own blood and life before His Father. Now we have the immediate relationship with God through the Holy Spirit (Heb 4:16; Eph 3:12).

"Knowing" in the OT refers to a personal relationship. In the OT when it says "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived . . . " (Gen 4:1); yāda^C ("knew") here means more than objective observation. The word which is commonly translated "to know" means to enter into a personal, close, warm-hearted relationship. The

¹Barrett, John, p. 68. Barrett understands that belief and knowledge are almost synonymous. They are synonymous for him except for one certain distinction; while Jesus is said to know God (7:29; 8:55; 10:15; 17:35) it is never declared that Jesus believes in Him. From this Barrett infers that faith includes the dependence of the created being upon the Creator; it is a quality which man will never outgrow. Ibid., p. 253.

²Keil and Delitzsch, Jeremiah, COT, 5[Bk. 2]:40.

relationship between a man and wife emphasizes an intimate trustful sexual relationship which culminates in the birth of a child. When Hosea complains that his people "are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos 4:6), he is not intimating that they have incorrect theological concepts, rather he is declaring that they have no personal knowing relationship with the Lord.

Therefore, John's understanding of ginoskein ("to know") is used in the Hebraistic sense. Hebrew is a concrete language which "never speaks of understanding except in such a context of truth's fruition." Understanding is named "only when it is in action . . ."¹ It is used in a covenantal sense of a trustful relationship with Christ. Robert Kysar suggests that in this sense it is a synonym for belief, for it harbors the same relationship which exists in faith. Now "to know" and "to believe" are personal, both are intimate, both are subject to subject, not subject to object.² "To know" does not imply a detached relationship with another, but an intimate involved relationship. This intimate relationship brings the believer and the "believed-in" person into a close unity.

¹The book by Tresmontant makes a great contribution by demonstrating the specific applications in the practical life of the believer which were inherent in the various Hebrew words. (Claude Tresmontant, A Study of Hebrew Thought [New York: Desclee Co., 1959], p. 125.)

²Robert Kysar, John, the Maverick Gospel (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), p. 79.

A further result of this sort of knowing which involves an intimate relationship is obedience. Those who would truly know one another must be servants to one another. No intimate relationship can last very long without true harmony existing between the individuals involved, and obedience is required to bring about this united concord.

Furthermore, according to Christ's understanding, the work of God (John 6:29) as defined by pisteuō implies more than a static mental acceptance; it assumes "faithfulness," an ongoing process of involvement in the life of the believer. Paul understands it this way in Rom 1:17 where it is stated: "He who through faith (pisteōs) is righteous shall live." This is a quote from Hab 2:4, ". . . but the righteous shall live by his faith." The word "faith" here is 'emūnāh in Hebrew, which is best translated as "faithfulness or a life of faith . . . characteristic of those justified in God's sight."¹ Robert B. Girdlestone understands the word here to mean "faithfulness." The word is used in the sense of steadiness of the hands of Moses at Exod 17:12 and of stability of the times in Isa 33:6. In several passages it is used in the sense of God's faithfulness (Deut 32:4; Ps 33:4; 96:13; 100:5; and 119:30). Girdlestone understands Hab 2:4 as follows:

¹Jack B. Scott, "'Emūnāh," TWOT, 1:52.

This passage might be rendered "the righteous (man) shall live in his faithfulness." . . . Certainly faith, in this passage, is something more than a bare acquiescence in God's word. It is such a belief in the revealed word of God as brings the man into contact with the Divine life, and so breathes righteousness or conformity to God's law into his heart. It worketh, as St. Paul says, by love.¹

Works as the Fruit of a Covenant
Relationship in John

In order to gain a better understanding of the covenant, a study of the covenantal meal, known as the Last Discourse (John 13-17), would be helpful in this study. Here Jesus lays down the principles of His kingdom on earth. Chapter 15 is the center point of the discourse. The chapter is not concerned with the departure of Jesus, His sufferings, or another future world. Rather, it is concerned with the disciples who continue to live here on this earth. Jesus is "the true vine" (15:1); it is union with Him that brings salvation. It is through Christ that they have a relationship with the husbandman. On the other hand, it is through Christ that the Father views humanity.

In chap. 15 the covenant relationship of the OT now gains strong intimacy in connection with the Messiah. This allegory of the True Vine is a positive one involving the relationship of Jesus with His disciples, their

¹Robert Baker Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1897), pp. 102-103.

remaining in Him to produce all fruit; otherwise they will be pruned and taken away.¹

This allegory presents Jesus as the true vine, God as the cultivator, and the disciples as the branches. There is only one way to determine the quality of the disciples' life-style and that is their fruitfulness (John 15:2). The branches which do not bear fruit are taken away, and even those which bear He "cleanses" so that they can bring forth more fruit. The root for the word "cleansed," kathairō, is also found at 13:10-11 concerning the cleansing of the disciples.²

The vine in this chapter refers back to the vine, or vineyard, in Isa 5:1-17, which is a symbol of the people of God. This symbolism is also brought out in Ps 80:9-15 where the Psalmist compares Israel to a carefully tended vine transplanted from Egypt. But now the vine is wasted by wild animals such as boars. Various fierce people made war with Israel until she was gored and torn as by a ravenous hog. One nation after another came upon Israel and brought havoc upon the nation. Jeremiah

¹There is a play on words in this verse (airei . . . kathairei). The best translation in English is "Every branch that beareth not fruit, he removeth; and every branch that beareth fruit, he reproveth." This falls short of the rhythmical pattern and accuracy of expression found in the Greek. N. Turner, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1963), 3:182.

²The word is used of cleansing corn by winnowing (Xenophon Oeconomicus xviii, 6) as well as clearing weeds from the ground before sowing (ibid., xx, 11).

complains that God planted a choice vine and it became degenerate and a wild vine (Jer 2:21).

In this allegory the geōrgos ("husbandman," "farmer") tends the vine and cuts away the barren branches. Since the Jews had proven unfaithful and rejected the Messiah, Israel could no longer be the vine, and Jesus Himself replaces it as the genuine vine. Jesus is qualified as the alēthinos (15:1), meaning "the true one" in the sense of real and genuine compared to that which is a substitute for reality, the unreal. Therefore John is saying "that with Jesus reality has entered into time." In Jesus Christ he is face to face with the divine and ultimate reality. Barclay finds the concept of ultimate reality underlying the Gospel of John.¹ In the LXX alētheia is one of the terms which translates 'emeth. The root of this word has the idea of "fix," "confirm," "establish." For this reason emeth emphasizes the quality of firmness or stability; when characterizing persons, it means "steadfastness," "trustworthiness," and it is especially trustworthy.² Brown points out that the LXX sometimes employs pistis, "faith," "fidelity," as being closer to the meaning of 'emeth. Christ is defined as

¹William Barclay, Introduction to John and the Acts of the Apostles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 151.

²C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 173.

"the true one" in Revelation which follows the analogy in the Gospel of John.

At John 15 the branches bear fruit. This allegory presents the vertical view of the vine with the husbandman, and the horizontal view of the vine and the branches. Jesus declares that He does the erga through the Father (14:10,11). The implication is that, when a believer does His works (14:12), he will be doing them through Christ. It is only when believers remain in Christ that they can effectively do His will. Since Christ is trustworthy and dependable he invites all believers to menē ("remain," "abide") in Him (15:4). The language used describes a relationship of mutual indwelling. This reciprocal indwelling has been described once before at 6:56 where it is stated that the one who eats the Lord's flesh and drinks His blood remains in the Lord, and the Lord in him. W. Robert Cook distinguishes between being in Christ and abiding in him.¹ In 1 John 3:24 it reveals that ho terōn tas entolas outou ("the one keeping his commandments") menēi (present tense; "continues to remain") in Christ. The object of menō is important, for if it is a place on earth, it is precarious and tenuous. Jesus invited the two disciples to "Come and see" (1:39), but Christ never designated the place. A certain location is inconsequential, at best it is only

¹W. Robert Cook, The Theology of John, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), p. 133-34.

temporary. Jesus Himself had no permanent home and made that fact clear by the comment that though foxes and birds have homes "the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt 8:20). Man is seeking permanence from his temporary existence which leads to final death and extinction. Jesus invites the disciples to "Come and see," a theme which is used in John to describe the "coming" and to describe faith (3:21; 5:40; 6:35,37,45; 7:37, etc.). It is only when man can menein ("dwell," "abide") with God that there is any permanence.¹

Christ commands us to meinate en tē agapē tē emē (aorist active imperative) ("remain once and for all in my love!"). "In my love" means Jesus' love for us and not our love for Him. It is by keeping His commandments (15:10) that we keep ourselves in His love. This is the condition for remaining in His love. The perfect active tense (tetērēka, "I have kept") indicates that Christ observed all of God's requirements and now He presents these before the disciples. John does not allow love to degenerate into insipid emotionalism or sentimentalism; it is a principle which is always moral and expressed through obedience.

The protasis at 14:15 ean agapate me ("if you love me") guides the grammar of the next two verses (16-17a), and the reflection in the next six (16-21). The covenantal relationship between Jesus and His disciples

¹R. E. Brown, John, 1:79.

depends upon their reciprocal love relationship. Their love relationship will not only result in the keeping of the commandments, but it will obtain the assistance of the Paraclete (14:16) as outlined in chap. 16.

One can note that just as the abiding of the Son in the Father was a personal relationship with the Father, so our abiding in Christ is to be a personal relationship with Christ. By abiding in the Father Christ retained His standing with Him; in the same manner by abiding with Christ we retain our standing with Him.

What we have here is a covenant relationship with Christ. This relationship bears fruit (15:2). Chapter 15 emphasizes a union with Christ which centers on a new relationship His disciples have with the Father and His relationship with the world. When the Father observes the disciples He views them through the Son, and as a result they are viewed as the Son. They are loved in the same way as the Son (15:18-21).

The new covenant relationship is revealed by Christ (16:23-27). "In that day" (16:23), viz. the era of the Holy Spirit (14:16,17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14), there would be no need of questions for the Spirit would teach them all things (14:6). Christ is the place where God and man work together in a cooperative venture to accomplish the goals of God (15:16). Jesus has a perfect vertical relationship with the Father; so in like manner we can have a perfect vertical relationship with the Father

through Christ and a corresponding perfect horizontal relationship with our fellowmen. Obedience, then, is the condition for abiding. At John 15:10 a comparison is made to the Son's obeying the Father, and, thereby, abiding in Him is compared to believers obeying Christ, and thereby abiding in Him. One can note that the abiding of the Son in the Father is a personal relationship with the Father. So a believer abiding in Christ maintains a personal relationship with Christ. By abiding in the Father, Christ retained His standing with the Father. In the same manner, by abiding with Christ believers retain their standing with Christ.

The Eucharist in Covenantal Terms

Jesus commands His disciples to love one another (John 13:34; 15:12,17). This is also discussed at 1 John 2:7-9; 3:23; 4:21; 5:2-2; and 2 John 5. This is in the setting of the Last Supper scene. In the OT the Ten Commandments are in the setting of the covenant between Yahweh and the Children of Israel. Brown finds that the Evangelist by speaking of love as a new commandment is thinking of the Eucharist in covenantal terms.¹ The synoptic accounts make this clear and specific. At Mark 14:24 Jesus states: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." At Luke 22:20: "This cup

¹Ibid., 2:612.

which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

For Jesus this fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah . . . " (Jer 31:31-34). The new covenant was made when Christ appeared with the water, bread and wine and fulfilled what had been exhibited by types in the OT so that the believers would have some conception of eternal life. An intimate relationship with God is declared here, which is made possible through the Holy Spirit. A close relationship is also indicated, for Jer 31:34 declares "for they shall all know me. . . . " "Knowledge" in covenantal language indicates a relationship of love.

God had already given His love to Israel, not because of any inherent quality which they had, but because of the covenant which He had made with them (Deut 7:6-8). John appears to contradict himself when he states in his epistle (1 John 2:7), "Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. . . . " John is not emphasizing the difference in the essence of the commandment, but he is emphasizing the degrees of light between the OT and NT dispensations. The old commandment was revealed anew through Christ and His Spirit was sent to revitalize His commandments in our lives (John 16:7).

In the allegory of the vine and the branches, the disciples are already in a covenantal union with Christ. The emphasis is to remain in that union. In this allegory Jesus takes upon Himself terms used in the OT for Israel. The Johannine technique replaces "the kingdom of God is like . . . " with "I am . . . " since the whole vine represents Jesus. The Christian believer in John is identified as a genuine Israelite (1:47), so a further extension of this concept would make the believers the new Israel.

It is clear that just as Jesus is the bread from heaven and the living water (John 4:14), so He is the vine that gives life. Brown compares the vine with bread of life and living water, which he correctly understands as involving exterior actions: "One has to drink water or eat the bread to have life." He understands drinking water and eating bread as symbols of believing in Jesus, while 15:7-17, according to him, explains remaining on the vine as symbolizing love.¹ Yet it is quite clear that Christ's request to His disciples to meneite en tē agapē mou ("you remain in my love") is conditional upon keeping his commandments ean tas entolas mou tērēsēte, "if you keep my commandments" (15:10).

What are the implications of bearing or not bearing fruit? Brown does not see a dichotomy between the life that comes from Christ and the translation of that

¹Ibid., 2:672.

life into virtue. Rather he understands love and keeping of the commandments as an integral part of the life of faith "that one who does not behave in a virtuous manner does not have life at all. Life is a committed life."¹ Brown therefore considers an unproductive branch "not simply a living, unproductive branch, but a dead branch."² Since these are already his branches (every branch of mine, 15:2), John is speaking to those who were Christ's disciples but who have rejected Him and are now dead. We find an analogy here with Jer 5:10 where a command is given "strip away her branches, for they are not the Lord's." At the Last Supper Judas may be thought of as a branch which did not bear fruit. Barrett interprets the parallel statements at John 15:10 as showing that love and obedience are mutually dependent. Love arises out of obedience, obedience out of love."³

To understand what the fruit is may be clearly understood from Gal 5:22,23 " . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." This can be described as "the peaceful fruit of righteousness . . . " Heb 12:11. The quantity of this fruit cannot be determined, but the quality will be perfect as long as it draws life from the vine.

¹R. E. Brown, John, 2:675.

²Ibid., 2:675.

³Barrett, St. John, p. 397.

The disciples have been kathairei ("cleansed") (15:3) on account of the word. This would mean justified by the forgiveness of sins. This cleansing by faith (justification), according to Lenski, does not exclude the cleansing which follows and that is the putting away of all sin of the flesh (sanctification).¹ Those abiding in the Saviour will not only refuse every influence that would draw them away from Christ, but it will constantly respond with good works or fruit. The present tenses menē and menēte denote a continuous remaining. Those remaining in Jesus will continue to increase in good works. For they will bear "more" fruit (15:2) and even "much fruit" (15:8). The greatest harvest possible will be provided. One who bears little fruit has a poor relationship to the vine.

The unfruitful branch is thrown out (15:6). The inner separation is followed by outer alienation. The disciple who no longer believes in Jesus also disregards the entolai ("commandments") of Jesus.

Finally the fruitless branches are gathered and burned, so the ultimate extinction of the unfaithful is decreed (Matt 10:28; 13:38-40; 25:41,46). The proof of the disciples' love comes in keeping His commandments (15:10). Christ is the great model who cherished and kept the commandments.

¹Lenski, St. John's Gospel, p. 1031.

Good Erga in the NT

The term ergon in the NT is used forty-eight times in the sense of good deeds; it is used thirty times in the sense of evil deeds. In the LXX, however, evil deeds are cited seventy-three times while good deeds are cited twenty-one times. While in the LXX evil deeds are noted in a ratio of four to one, in the NT three-fifths of the uses of ergon are good deeds.

While in the LXX the righteous deeds are qualified as good, good deeds are almost always used of the righteous in a general sense. Hezekiah appears to be the only exception of an individual whose deeds are qualified as good (2 Chron 32:30). A number of times the OT states that the Lord will bless the work of the righteous (Deut 2:7; 15:10; 28:12), but this does not describe any actual good deeds being performed by a specific individual.

In the NT, however, specific good deeds are commended. Jesus endorses the deed of the woman who annointed His feet with ointment from an alabaster box (Matt 26:10; Mark 14:6). Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel are commended for working deeds of righteousness (Heb 11:32,33). Moll suggests these acts are not purely ethical, but were done in connection with the office of judges, kings and prophets.¹

¹Carl Bernard Moll, Hebrews, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1960), 11:195.

Nevertheless these are good deeds done within the context of righteousness or ethical uprightness. Moulton considers ergazesthai in vs. 33 a constative aorist which "surveys in perspective the continuous labour which is so often expressed by ergazesthai."¹ The third Epistle of John was written to Gaius who is commended for his faithfulness. Believers came from time to time to John informing him of Gaius' faithfulness in the face of difficulties which he had boldly met.² Gaius walked not only in word but in truth, he not only spoke the truth, he practised the truth (3 John 3). Moulton views ergasē (3 John 5) as a constative aorist (as in Heb 11:33 above) which surveys in perspective the continuous labor which is generally expressed in the present tense.³ Therefore, good works were a life-style by which he was recognized. Dorcas is another example of someone who performed good works; in her case it is stated that "she was full (plērēs) of good works and charity" (Acts 9:36). Plērēs, according to Gerhard Delling means "rich fullness,"⁴ so Dorcas had the full measure of good

¹Moulton, NT Greek, p. 116.

²Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle of St. John (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1966), p. 236.

³Moulton, NT Greek, p. 116.

⁴Gerhard Delling, "Plērēs," TDNT, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964-76), 6:285.

works. Her special gift of good works was in the form of "acts of charity" which is helping the poor.

Proper behavior is recommended in place of exterior decorum in the NT. Paul in 1 Tim 2:10 advises women to refrain from adornments such as braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire, rather he advises that "women who profess religion" perform "good deeds." In this text he is exchanging bad exterior behavior patterns for good exterior behavior patterns. Good deeds like evil deeds cannot be concealed forever. When choosing an elder, good deeds will become conspicuous (1 Tim 5:25).

Paul admonished Timothy that "all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Barrett at 2 Tim 3:17 finds that "good works" are "useful tasks that fall to a minister's lot."¹ Good works are more than Barrett's limited concept, for artios ("suitable," "adapted for something") is used "to denote what is right or proper" especially to a Christian, therefore with a moral accent. Exartizō ("finish," "equip") "means to bring to a suitable state for Christian moral action."² Therefore, Scripture prepares the

¹C. K. Barrett, The Pastoral Epistles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 115.

²Gerhard Delling, "Artios," TDNT, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964-76), 1:476.

believer for continuous growth improving both the inward capacity and outward accomplishment of everything that is pleasing to the Lord. Good works are to be encouraged for we are admonished by Hebrews to stir one another up for love and good works (Heb 10:24). Good works are not to be done for self but to glorify God (1 Pet 2:12).

God is able to give us autarkeia ("sufficiency," "competence") (2 Cor 9:8), a condition in which one is independent from man in which the overabundant resources come from God. This spirit will give the qualifications for doing good. Christ gave His life as a sacrifice for humanity so as "to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds" (Tit 2:14).

Other Uses of Ergon in the NT

Faith undergirds all deeds by the Christian, deeds by themselves can never take place without faith for that would be Jewish legalism. On the other hand, faith cannot stand without works, it is barren (Jas 2:20). Faith cooperates with and undergirds works in a holistic concept of faithfulness.

The concept, "work of God," is used in various ways in the NT: (1) spiritual edification of the community (Rom 14:20), (2) righteous actions which confirm their origin from God (Acts 5:38), (3) work of evangelism done by the apostles (Acts 13:2; Phil 2:30), (4) God's work in the spiritual life of the individual Christian (1 Cor

15:58), and (5) the work of perfecting Christian character by Christ (Phil 1:6).

In the NT all good work is considered ultimately as God's work through men. For Paul, work is the fruit of faith which "shows itself operative through love" (Gal 5:6).¹ In 1 Thess 1:3 "works" are produced by faith, prompted by love and inspired by hope. Paul concludes that man must be judged on the basis of works (Rom 2:6). Luther understands erga in Rom 2:6 as works and deeds which are "tangible proof because of their virtues."² On the other hand, Hodge considers God's works here as general principles of justice.³ Sanday and Headlam feel that "works are the evidence of faith, and faith has its necessary outcome in works."⁴

For Paul the erga nomou ("works of the law") have become self-righteous acts in Judaism (Rom 9:32) and have acquired a negative sense, for they are useless in the sight of God. While self-righteous works of the law are denied, validity in the judgment, "good works" (ergon kalon), as done by the woman who annointed him, are

¹Otto Schmoller, Galatians, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1960), 11:128.

²Luther, Commentary on Romans, p. 56.

³Hodge, Romans, p. 50.

⁴Sanday and Headlam, Epistle to the Romans, ICC, p. 57.

recommended by Jesus (Matt 26:10) and identified by Paul as "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6).

For Paul and for all believers all work is the fruit of faith. This faith is pistis di agapēs energoumenē ([faith working through love] Gal 5:6) A unitary character is thus given to Christian action evoked by God and proceeding from faith. For this reason this action can and must be for Paul the standard by which man is judged (Rom 2:6).¹

When man does works outside Christ the works are regarded from a negative viewpoint; they range from the works of darkness (Rom 13:12) and the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19) to the works of the law which are futile in attaining eternal life (Rom 3:20,28). But works of faith are recommended (Gal 5:6; 1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 1:11; Jas 1:25; 2:17). These works are within the Christian standards of righteousness and are performed on the basis of faith and love. Therefore, faith and works complement each other in consummating the development of the Christian experience.²

¹Bertram, "Ergon," TDNT, 2:649. Though this paper faults Bertram for his negative analysis of ergon in the LXX and in the NT, his statement here is helpful.

²Eduard Lohse, "Glaube und Werke," Zeitschrift Für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und Die Kunde der Alterenkirche 48 (1957):1-22.

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